ṬABARĪ

Selections from

The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur'ān

VOLUME II



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ABBREVIATIONS

Commentary:	Ṭabarī. *The Commentary on the Qur'ān by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, being an abridged translation of Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan-taʾwīl āy al-Qur'ān*, with an introduction and notes by John Cooper. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
Al-Durr al-manthūr:	Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. *Al-Durr al-manthūr fi'l-tafsīr [bi-]al-maʾthūr*. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār al- Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004.
Dār Hajar:	Ṭabarī. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan-taʾwīl āy al-Qur'ān*. Ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī and Markaz al-Buḥūth wa'l-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya wa'l-Islāmiyya bi-Dār Hajar. 27 vols. Cairo: Hajar, 2001. Available at: http://www.archive.org/details/TafsirTabariTurki.
EI²:	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online, 2012.
Guillaume:	Guillaume, Alfred. *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1955].
Hava:	Hava, J. G. *Arabic-English Dictionary*. New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001 [1899].
Ḥalabī or *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*:	Ṭabarī. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan-taʾwīl āy al-Qur'ān*. 30 vols. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1954–1968.
Lane:	Lane, Edward. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1863. Available at: http://www.tyndalearchive.com/tabs/lane/.
Al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz:	Ibn ʿAṭiyya. *Al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī-tafsīr al-kitāb al-ʿazīz*. 6 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2007.

Q.	Qur'ān.
Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī:	Ṭabarī. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiᶜ al-bayān ᶜan-ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*. Ed. Maḥmūd Shākir and Aḥmad Shākir. 16 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Maᶜārif, 1957–1969.
Wright:	Wright, William. *Arabic Grammar*. 2 vols. in 1. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2005.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

I. THE AUTHOR: MUḤAMMAD B. JARĪR AL-ṬABARĪ

Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī was a scholar's scholar.[1] He collected an extraordinary quantity of religious and historical reports, and produced exceptional books, only a few of which survive. Ṭabarī was born in 224–25/839 in Āmul, Ṭabaristan (present-day northern Iran) into a prosperous, landowning family, who supported his lifetime of scholarly pursuits. From the ages of 12–17, he studied and collected thousands of *isnād*-supported narrations of early Muslims' opinions in Rayy (near modern Tehran). He was also an avid collector of poetry and history. From the ages of 17–31, he undertook two long journeys in the search of knowledge: one of which brought him to the Iraqi cities of Baghdad, Basra and Kufa, and the second of which took him to cities in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. He settled in Baghdad in 256/870, where he composed books and taught until his death in 310/923. Widely considered a master scholar and an absolutely independent jurist (*mujtahid muṭlaq*), his books were highly esteemed during his lifetime. Unlike most scholars, Ṭabarī never married, devoting himself entirely to his work. He also avoided holding any government positions, although he served for a few years as a tutor for the son of an ᶜAbbāsid *wazīr*.

Over the course of his life, Ṭabarī cited reports from more than 425 teachers.[2] He included at least one report from 148 of his teachers in the selections of his Qur'ānic commentary included in this translation. Fourteen of these teachers are unknown, as none of the major biographical

1 Sources for the life of Ṭabarī include: Franz Rosenthal's introduction to Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. I: General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, translated by Franz Rosenthal (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 5–134; C. E. Bosworth, "al-Ṭabarī", *EI²*; Claude Gilliot, *Exégèse, Langue et Théologie en Islam: L'Exégèse Coranique de Tabari* (Paris: Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1990), 19–68; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārikh madinat al-salām*, ed. Bashshār ᶜAwwād Maᶜrūf, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 2:548–56; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muᶜjam al-udabā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ᶜIlmiyya, 1991), 5:242–75; Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shuᶜayb al-Arnā'ūṭ et al., 28 vols. (Beirut: Muᶜassasat al-Risāla, 2001), 14:267–82.

2 The most thorough study of Ṭabarī's teachers is Akram Muḥammad al-Atharī, *Muᶜjam shuyūkh al-Ṭabarī* (Amman and Cairo: n.p., 2005). See also Gilliot, *Exégèse*, 19–33.

dictionaries of early Muslim scholars have an entry on them. The vast majority of these teachers lived in Iraq: 40 were in Baghdad, 32 in Basra, 26 in Kufa and 2 in Wasit. Egypt, presumably the capital city of Fustat (Old Cairo), was the second most important location for Ṭabarī, with eight teachers, followed by Homs, Syria (six teachers) and Merv, Turkmenistan (five teachers). He cited three teachers each from the Palestinian cities of Ashkelon and Ramla, and two teachers in Rayy and his hometown of Āmul. Finally, he quoted reports from just a single teacher in the cities of Ahwaz, Beirut, Gaza, Harran, Jerusalem, Mosul, Nishapur and Raqqa. Interestingly, he does not cite any teachers in this translated selection of his commentary from Damascus, Mecca or Medina.

Most of these teachers narrated a variety of reports from multiple sources, while a few of them narrated what most Western scholars have been reluctant to call "books"—large numbers of reports with an identical chain of transmitters, or *isnād*. Teachers who narrated a diverse array of Companion, Successor and occasionally Prophetic reports include: Muḥammad b. Bashshār (d. 252/866) and Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā (d. 252/866) in Basra; Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-ʿAlāʾ (d. 248/862) and Sufyān b. Wakīʿ (d. 247/861) in Kufa; and Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī in Baghdad. Scholars who narrated books of early exegesis to Ṭabarī include: Bishr b. Muʿādh al-ʿAqadī (d. 245/859–60) in Basra; Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā (d. 264/877–88) in Egypt; and three Baghdadi scholars: ʿAlī b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī (d. 272/886 or 270/883–84), Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma (d. 282/895) and Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-Bāhilī (d. 249/863). Ṭabarī received both diverse narrations and books, such as Ibn Isḥāq's biography of the Prophet, from his first famous teacher, Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd (d. 248/862), in Rayy, Iran.

Ṭabarī collected far more than just exegetical reports from his teachers. In Beirut, he studied with ʿAbbās b. al-Walīd (d. 270/883), from whom he obtained the legal teachings of Awzāʿī and the Qur'ānic reading of Ibn ʿĀmir. In Egypt, he acquired the legal writings of Shāfiʿī from Shāfiʿī's disciples Muzanī (d. 264/877) and al-Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān (d. 270/884), and the teachings of Mālik from two of the sons of the famous Mālikī jurist ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 214/829). In Baghdad, he studied with the philologist Thaʿlab (d. 291/904) and he was a good friend of Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933), the latter of whom composed an elegy for him. He also had in his home a copy of the early medical handbook *Firdaws al-ḥikma* by ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī.

Most of Ṭabarī's books are lost.[1] His original works on jurisprudence have vanished with barely a trace, and only fragments of his study of juristic normative pluralism (*ikhtilāf*) survive. Portions of his incomplete study of the legal implications of *ḥadiths*, *Tahdhib al-āthār*, have survived and were published by the Egyptian scholar Maḥmūd Shākir. A fragment of a short theological work, titled *al-Tabṣir fi maʿālim al-dīn*, survives in a unique manuscript in Spain and has been published. The only complete works to have survived, in addition to his short creed and possibly his book on Qur'ānic readings, are his *Tārikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* (History of the Messengers and Kings) and his vast Qur'ānic commentary, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwil āy al-Qurʾān* (The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur'ān).[2]

II. THE COMMENTARY: *The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur'ān*

The Comprehensive Exposition belongs to a small cluster of four early Qur'ānic commentaries devoted to the collection of *isnād*-supported reports, called *al-tafsīr bi'l-maʾthūr*. Prior to Ṭabarī, ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd al-Kissī (d. 249/863) composed a work of this genre that is lost, although one can get a sense of its content from the references to it in Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-manthūr*. Two of Ṭabarī's junior contemporaries—Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/939) of Rayy and Abū Bakr b. al-Mundhir (d. 318/930), a Nishapurian scholar who settled in Mecca—collected thousands of exegetical reports and composed Qur'ānic commentaries that only partially survive.[3] It is clear that Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn al-Mundhir drew

1 Within a century of Ṭabarī's death, Ibn al-Nadīm recorded several of these titles in his *Fihrist* and awarded Ṭabarī his own chapter, on the basis of his independent legal school; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist li'l-Nadim*, ed. Reza Tajaddod (Tehran Offprint, 1973), 291–92. The most complete list of Ṭabarī's works is found in Rosenthal's General Introduction to *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 1, 80–134.

2 I have adopted John Cooper's felicitous translation of the title of Ṭabarī's Qur'ānic commentary; John Cooper, *The Commentary on the Qur'ān by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), xii.

3 Only the commentary on Q.2:272 through Q.4:92 survives of Ibn al-Mundhir's commentary, which has been published in two volumes; Ibn al-Mundhir, *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. Saʿd al-Saʿd, 2 vols. (Medina: n.p., 2002). There exist several editions of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's complete commentary, although only the commentary on Q.1–13 and Q.23–29 is based on manuscripts of this work. The remaining sections have been filled in by using citations of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's commentary preserved in Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-manthūr*, a work which provides only one version of each report that is found, usually with unpredictable variations, in multiple sources; see Mehmet Koç, "*Isnāds* and *Rijāl* Expertise in the Exegesis of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (327/939)", *Der Islam*, 82 (2005): 146–68.

from a common pool of early exegetical books and reports ascribed to an array of Companions, Successors and the Prophet Muḥammad. The master Mamlūk-era scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) considered Ṭabarī's commentary to be the superior and unsurpassed work of this genre, because he synthesized an unprecedented number of exegetical reports with detailed grammatical analyses and a summary of the variant Qur'ānic readings for the entire Qur'ān.[1]

1. Ṭabarī's Introduction

One of the most valuable aspects of Ṭabarī's Qur'ānic commentary is its long Introduction, translated here in its entirety for the first time. After a brief defense of the premise that every word in the Qur'ān is native to the Arabic language, Ṭabarī devotes tremendous space to explaining the enigmatic Prophetic teaching, "The Qur'ān was sent down according to seven *aḥruf*." The meaning of *aḥruf* (sing. *ḥarf*) has generated a rich debate among Muslim and non-Muslim scholars over the centuries. Ṭabarī rejects the popular idea that the seven *aḥruf* are seven languages (or dialects) of Arabic that are found in the standard ʿUthmānic edition of the Qur'ān, arguing on the basis of narrated reports that depict the Prophet allowing the earliest Arab Muslims to recite the Qur'ān using different Arabic words, so long as these words were synonymous with the text that he disseminated among them. This variation of "wordings", which is how I have rendered *aḥruf* in English, led to conflict among Muslims shortly after the Prophet died, as each group thought that it had the correct wording of the Qur'ān. The solution to this crisis offered by the caliphs Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān was to appoint a committee of Companions to reduce the Qur'ān to a single wording in a codex (*muṣḥaf*) and prohibit the recitation of all wordings that departed from the Arabic consonantal foundation (*rasm*) of the codex. The consequence of this caliphal action, which Ṭabarī defends vigourously, was that only one *ḥarf* of the Qur'ān survived and the remaining ones were irretrievably lost.

Ṭabarī's Introduction is also of interest for his discussion of the debates over the propriety of Qur'ānic commentary and its origins. He identifies several famous scholars of Medina, such as Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab, who refused to interpret the Qur'ān and disparaged those who did.

1 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-ʿUjāb fī bayān al-asbāb*, ed. Fawwāz Zamarlī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002), 57. Suyūṭī quotes this passage at the end of *al-Durr al-manthūr*, as an appendix to his work.

Mecca and Kufa are presented as the origins of exegesis, although, with the exception of the Companion ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (d. 68/687–88), the tradition of exegesis begins with a few Successors—Muslims who were born too late to see the Prophet Muḥammad and studied with his Companions. Some of the early commentators, such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī and ʿIkrima, are depicted in a less-than-favourable light.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of Ṭabarī's Introduction to his Qur'ānic commentary is the declaration of his hermeneutics. Ṭabarī writes:

> If that is how it is, then the commentators who are most likely to arrive at the true interpretation of the Qur'ān that is accessible to humans are those who [1] have the clearest proofs of what is interpreted and explained, among the [passages] whose interpretation was sent exclusively to the Messenger of God (ṣ). [These interpretations must be] in sound reports (*thābita*) from the Messenger of God (ṣ). [These reports must be transmitted] either by an overwhelming number of narrators (*al-naql al-mustafīḍ*),[1] or by established, reliable transmitters (*naql al-ʿudūl al-athbāt*), in cases where the transmission is not by an overwhelming number of narrators, or by means of an indicator establishing their soundness. [2] [The best commentators also] have the soundest proof for what they explain and clarify, among those whose knowledge of [interpretation] is acquired from the perspective of language, either by means of evidence from all types of Arabic poetry, or from the overwhelmingly attested [qualities] of the Arabs' speech and languages. This person is [the best interpreter] so long as his interpretation and commentary does not depart from the exegetical opinions of the Pious Predecessors (*salaf*), among the Companions and religious authorities (*a'imma*), and those who followed them (*khalaf*), among the

1 The term *mustafīḍ* is explained below, in the chapter containing the translation of Ṭabarī's Introduction.

Successors and scholars of the community.[1]

The only two forms of evidence Ṭabarī allows for arriving at the correct interpretation of the Qur'ān are sound *ḥadīths* or linguistic evidence in the form of Arabic poetry. Why, then, does Ṭabarī's commentary contain over 20,000 Companion and Successor reports? The answer to this question is found in the final sentence above: while these reports do not yield proof of the meaning of the Qur'ān, they establish limits to the range of acceptable interpretations a Muslim may adopt. This restriction contrasts sharply with the hermeneutics of Abū Isḥāq al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035), whom a recent North American scholar has argued is the real founder of classical Qur'ānic exegesis, and who promotes a very wide range of possible interpretations of the Qur'ān.[2] Ṭabarī believed that there was a correct understanding of the Qur'ān, and that the only way to reach it was through a profound knowledge of Arabic poetry and syntax, sound *ḥadīths* and consideration of what the religious experts among the early generations of Muslims thought it meant.

2. The Variant Qur'ānic Readings

Ṭabarī typically begins each section of his commentary with a synopsis of the various readings of the verses, should variations exist. He usually refrains from naming individual Qur'ān reciters, preferring instead to refer to cities where the major reciters lived: Basra, Kufa, Syria/Damascus, Medina and Mecca. The widespread concept of the "seven canonical Qur'ānic readings" was formulated by Ṭabarī's younger contemporary Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936), who also lived in Baghdad, and had not yet become canonical during Ṭabarī's lifetime. Ṭabarī wrote a comprehensive book on Qur'ānic recitations that may survive in manuscript, but never became widely known. He also incorporates numerous examples of "irregular readings", especially those ascribed to the Companion ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/652–53). Unlike most

1 *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī and Markaz al-Buḥūth waʾl-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya waʾl-Islāmiyya bi-Dār Hajar, 24 vols. (Cairo: Hajar, 2001), 1:88; *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Maḥmūd Shākir and Aḥmad Shākir, 16 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1957–1969), 1:93. This passage occurs a few pages later in Ṭabarī's Introduction from the passage Jane McAuliffe discusses in her chapter, "Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr", *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 46–62. The passage she cites (1:74 of the Shākir edition) is important, but it does not explain why Ṭabarī's commentary has so many post-Prophetic reports in it.

2 See Walid Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical* Tafsīr *Tradition* (Boston: Brill, 2004).

variations of Qur'ānic readings, which occur at the level of short vowels or whether a letter is a *nūn*, *yāʾ* or *tāʾ*,[1] irregular readings consist of the substitution of entirely different words from those found in the ʿUthmānic codex. In short, Ṭabarī's commentary is a valuable source for the variant readings of the Qur'ān, both those that Muslim scholars consider regular as well as those they regard as irregular.

3. Arabic Poetry and Syntax

Ṭabarī's Qur'ānic commentary draws heavily upon two of the most significant early books on the Arabic language: *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* by Yaḥyā b. Ziyād al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822–23) and *Majāz al-Qurʾān* by Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā (d. 209/824–25). Al-Farrāʾ was a famous Kufan grammarian who tutored the children of the ʿAbbāsid caliph Maʾmūn. His book *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* was promoted by the caliph and disseminated among the scholarly elite of Baghdad, so it would have been easy for Ṭabarī to obtain a copy of it. Abū ʿUbayda was a famous Basran philologist, several of whose books survive, including his comparative collection of the poems by al-Farazdaq and Jarīr. Despite being a Khārijī and lacking expertise in the traditional Islamic disciplines, like law and *Ḥadīth*, Abū ʿUbayda's reputation as a master of the Arabic language was widely admired, and his *Majāz al-Qurʾān* proved indispensable to the genre of Qur'ānic commentary.

While most of the poetry found in Ṭabarī's commentary can be traced to these two aforementioned books, it is clear that Ṭabarī had at his disposal an extensive corpus of poetry beyond these two sources. Poetry has a strictly functional, rather than edifying, purpose in *The Comprehensive Exposition*. It clarifies grammatical constructs as well as shades of meaning that a word may have. In the absence of standardized dictionaries, Ṭabarī relied heavily on pre-Islamic, early Islamic and Umayyad-era poets for insight into the meaning of unusual Arabic words and grammatical constructs.

Ṭabarī typically alludes to al-Farrāʾ as "one of the Kufans" and to Abū ʿUbayda as "one of the Basrans". A second Basran who appears occasionally in *The Comprehensive Exposition* is Saʿīd b. Masʿada al-Akhfash (d. 210/825–26), and it is clear that Ṭabarī incorporated passages from

1 When Arabic is written without dots, which was customary in the early centuries of Islam, the letters *bāʾ*, *tāʾ*, *thāʾ*, *nūn* and *yāʾ* are frequently indistinguishable orthographically. This feature of the Arabic script may have contributed to the emergence of variant readings that generally had a minimal impact on the meaning of the text.

al-Akhfash's *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* into his commentary as well. Al-Akhfash, who came to Basra from Balkh, Afghanistan, was a student of the famous grammarians Khalīl b. Aḥmad and Sībawayh, and allegedly tutored the sons of the prominent Kufan grammarian Kisāʾī.

Although Ṭabarī relies heavily upon al-Farrāʾ and Abū ʿUbayda for their lexical and grammatical expertise, he is also highly critical of some of their positions, especially those of the latter. For example, in the Introduction to his commentary, he rejects at length Abū ʿUbayda's claim that "In the Name of God (*biʾsmiʾllāh*)" is equivalent to "with [the help] of God (*biʾllāh*)".

4. Companion and Successor Opinions

In an unpublished study of 1,327 reports among the passages translated in these volumes, I found that only 9 per cent of them consisted of *ḥadīths*.[1] Nearly one in five reports consisted of the opinion of Ibn ʿAbbās, the Companion and cousin of the Prophet; and one-third of them were the opinions of either the Basran Successor Qatāda b. Diʿāma (d. 117/735) or the Meccan Successor Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. between 102 and 108/720–27). Other early religious authorities whose opinions Ṭabarī cites frequently in his commentary include the post-Successor Medinan scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd (d. 182/798); the Kufan Successor al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d. between 102 and 106/720–25); and the famous Basran Successor al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728). Altogether, Ṭabarī cites the opinions of 86 early Muslim authorities in the passages of his commentary included here.

The dominance of the exegetical opinions of Ibn ʿAbbās, Qatāda and Mujāhid makes sense after a closer examination of his sources. In his groundbreaking 1953 article, Heribert Horst published an analysis of the *isnāds* of 35,400 reports in Ṭabarī's commentary.[2] He found that 15,700 of them came from a mere 21 *isnāds*, and then proceeded to identify Ṭabarī's most frequently occurring *isnāds*. The most plausible explanation for this finding was that Ṭabarī was using books (or private notebooks) that recorded a single religious authority's opinions on a significant number of Qurʾānic verses, as can be seen from Table 1.

1 Scott C. Lucas, "Disciplinary Specialization among Companions and Successors: Evidence from the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abī Shayba and al-Ṭabarī's Qurʾān Commentary", paper presented at the 221st meeting of the American Oriental Society, Chicago, 11–14 March 2011. In other words, nine out of ten times, Ṭabarī quotes someone other than the Prophet Muḥammad in the *isnād*-supported reports in his Qurʾānic commentary.

2 Heribert Horst, "Zur Überlieferung im Korankommentar aṭ-Ṭabarīs", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 103 (1953): 290–307.

Table 1: Early Collections and Collectors of Qurʾānic Commentary

Authority	Collector	Ṭabarī's Source	No. of Reports[1]	Reference (Horst 1953)
Qatāda b. Diʿāma	Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba	Bishr b. Muʿādh al-ʿAqadī	3,060	*Isnād* 14
Ibn Zayd	Ibn Wahb	Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā	1,800	*Isnād* 20
Ibn ʿAbbās	ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī	Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī	1,560	[*Isnād* 3][2]
Mujāhid b. Jabr	Ibn Abī Najīḥ	Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-Bāhilī	1,700	*Isnād* 7a
Mujāhid b. Jabr	Ibn Abī Najīḥ	Al-Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma	1,000	*Isnād* 7b
Ibn ʿAbbās	ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa	ʿAlī b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī	970	*Isnād* 1
Mujāhid b. Jabr	Ibn Abī Najīḥ	al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī	680	*Isnād* 8
Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim	ʿUbayd b. Sulaymān	Anonymous[3]	670	*Isnād* 19
Ibn ʿAbbās	ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa	al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī	560	*Isnād* 2

1 This refers to the number of reports in the entire *Comprehensive Exposition*, not just the passages translated in these volumes.
2 This *isnād* was corrected by Claude Gilliot, who identified Muḥammad b. Saʿd as a descendent of ʿAṭiyya al-ʿAwfī, rather than the scholar who composed the book *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*; Gilliot, *Exégèse*, 25.
3 According to Aṭharī, Ṭabarī's source for this collection of al-Ḍaḥḥāk's exegetical opinions was ʿAbdān b. Muḥammad al-Marwazī (d. 293/906); *Muʿjam shuyūkh al-Ṭabarī*, 771. ʿAbdān was a well-respected *muftī* of Merv, so Ṭabarī's reason for suppressing his name is puzzling, unless he did so because he copied this book without having it read to him by ʿAbdān (or another teacher).

The men who, according to the face value of the *isnād* evidence, collected the opinions of Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, Qatāda, al-Ḍaḥḥāk and Ibn Zayd all lived during the mid-Umayyad and early-ʿAbbāsid periods, and were known as prominent students of these religious authorities. However, there is significant evidence that they did not always hear the teachings directly from the mouths of their exegetical authorities. Ibn

Abī Najīḥ allegedly collected Mujāhid's *tafsīr* from Qāsim b. Abī Bazza, while ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa, who settled in Homs, probably collected Ibn ʿAbbās' *tafsīr* from Mujāhid.[1] The Kufan ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī, a student of Ibn ʿAbbās, was associated with pro-ʿAlid sentiments, and some of his descendants who narrated this *tafsīr* were considered unreliable narrators.[2] On the other hand, the Basran scholar Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba was a recognized student of Qatāda, and ʿUbayd b. Sulaymān, a Kufan who settled in Merv, was a well-known student of al-Ḍaḥḥāk.[3] Finally, the Egyptian ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb, who collected Ibn Zayd's opinions during his studies with Mālik in Medina, passed them to Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, who was Ṭabarī's immediate teacher.

Horst also discerned fragments of earlier Qur'ānic commentaries, which cited multiple religious authorities, embedded in Ṭabarī's commentary. Ṭabarī acquired 1,080 reports of the commentary of Maʿmar b. Rāshid (d. between 152 and 158/769–75) from Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Ṣanʿānī in Basra, along with another 630 reports of it from al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā in Baghdad.[4] He obtained Ibn Jurayj's (d. 150/767) commentary on *sūras* 1–29 from al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan who, according to Gilliot, was the Baghdadi theologian who died in 272/885.[5] Finally, Ṭabarī received 860 reports of Suddī's commentary from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Baghdādī and another 530 reports from his unknown teacher Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Hamdānī.[6]

Ṭabarī was not the only scholar to use these early collections of exegetical reports. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, his junior contemporary in Rayy, made use of the following identical collections as Ṭabarī in his commentary:[7]

a) Muʿāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ ← ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa ← Ibn ʿAbbās
(Horst *isnāds* 1, 2/ Koç *isnād* I)
b) Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd ← ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd ← Ibn ʿAbbās
(Horst *isnād* 3/ Koç *isnād* X)
c) Warqāʾ ← Ibn Abī Najīḥ ←Mujāhid
(Horst *isnād* 7b/ Koç *isnād* III)

1 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb fī rijāl al-ḥadīth*, ed. ʿAlī Muʿawwaḍ and ʿĀdil ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 3:684 (Ibn Abī Najīḥ); 4:614 (ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa).
2 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:510.
3 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 2:670 (Saʿīd); 4:364 (ʿUbayd).
4 Horst, *isnād* 12 and *isnād* 13, 301.
5 Gilliot, 27. This is Horst's *isnāds* 4–6. Athārī is of the opinion that this al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan is one of Ṭabarī's "unknown" teachers; *Mu'jam shuyūkh al-Ṭabarī*, 407.
6 Horst, *isnāds* 15 and 16, 302.
7 Koç, "*Isnāds* and *Rijāl* Expertise in the Exegesis of Ibn Abī Ḥātim", 151–55.

d) Yazīd b. Zurayʿ ← Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba ← Qatāda
(Horst *isnād* 14/ Koç *isnād* IV)
e) Abū Muʿādh ←ʿUbayd b. Sulaymān ← al-Ḍaḥḥāk
(Horst *isnād* 19/ Koç *isnād* XXXI)
f) ʿAmr b. Ḥammād ←Asbāṭ b. Naṣr ← Suddī
(Horst *isnād* 16/ Koç *isnād* VII)

Ibn al-Mundhir, Ṭabarī's other contemporary, also incorporated Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba's collection of Qatāda's exegetical opinions narrated by Yazīd b. Zurayʿ, selections from ʿAbd al-Razzāq's commentary from Maʿmar and Abū ʿUbayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān*. Unlike Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Mundhir drew from the early commentary of Zakariyyā b. Dāwūd (d. 286/899) of Nishapur and the book of Qur'ānic readings by Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838).

5. What Was Left Out of Ṭabarī's Commentary?

Despite its imposing size, there are several features of classical Qur'ānic commentary that are absent from *The Comprehensive Exposition*. Ṭabarī does not indicate whether a *sūra* is Meccan or Medinan, meaning whether it was revealed prior to or after the Emigration in 622 CE. He refrains from relating reports about the special qualities or merits of reciting certain *sūras*, called *faḍā'il* in Arabic. Occasions for the revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of specific *sūras* and verses are not consistently provided, although Ṭabarī does link many Qur'ānic passages with the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. Rarely does he cite the exegetical opinions of any scholars who lived during the 3rd/9th century or who were his contemporaries. The master jurists of the early ʿAbbāsid period—Abū Ḥanīfa, Awzāʿī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik, Shāfiʿī, Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Rāhawayh and Abū Thawr—are absent from Ṭabarī's commentary too, even though his book *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'* shows that he was intimately familiar with their legal opinions. Edifying poetry, anecdotes and stories are generally absent, although Ṭabarī does include a significant amount of Judeo-Christian lore in passages that are not part of this translation. Unlike many classical exegetes, such as Abū'l-Layth al-Samarqandī, Thaʿlabī or Baghawī, Ṭabarī studiously avoids quoting the early Qur'ānic commentary of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) and makes minimal reference to the early commentary of Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763), presumably because he did not have confidence in their opinions and narrations. In short, Ṭabarī stays true to the title of his commentary: his objective is to clarify the correct meanings

of the Qur'ān, rather than explore all of its possible interpretations or the auxiliary issues beyond the meaning of its verses.

6. Influence of *The Comprehensive Exposition*

Ṭabarī's commentary had a profound influence on the genre of Qur'ānic commentary, the full extent of which remains to be determined. The oldest surviving manuscript of a significant part of *The Comprehensive Exposition* dates back to the 4th/10th century and is preserved in Fez, Morocco, which is 2,800 miles from Ṭabarī's home in Baghdad. Exegetes such as Thaʿlabī in Nishapur, Māwardī in Baghdad, Ibn ʿAṭiyya in Granada, Ibn Kathīr in Damascus and Suyūṭī in Cairo made extensive use of Ṭabarī's commentary, even though they felt free to disagree with his personal opinions and discard its bulky *isnāds*. In the Imāmī Shīʿī tradition, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, who lived most of his professional life in Baghdad, made use of *The Comprehensive Exposition* in his important commentary, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. The humanist Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī was effusive in his praise of this work in his famous biographical dictionary, *Muʿjam al-udabā'*. However, like so many early books of the Islamic tradition, the demand for Ṭabarī's commentary dissipated over time to such a degree that no complete manuscript existed in the twentieth century. According to Fuat Sezgin, about one hundred volumes of *The Comprehensive Exposition* survive in manuscripts in libraries around the world.[1] Fortunately, a group of Muslim scholars in Egypt laboured to publish a complete edition of this book in 30 volumes between the years 1905 and 1912. Several improved editions of Ṭabarī's commentary have appeared subsequently, which will be discussed below, to the point that *The Comprehensive Exposition* is more easily accessible today than at any time in history.

III. NOTES REGARDING THIS TRANSLATION

To my knowledge, this publication contains the first effort to translate into English a significant portion of Ṭabarī's Qur'ānic commentary without abridgements. This publication consists of thirty-two passages which are equivalent to approximately 8 per cent of *The Comprehensive Exposition*. In the remaining pages of this introduction, I shall explain the rationale behind the selection of the translated passages, the print editions of *The Comprehensive Exposition* upon which I based this translation, and my editorial conventions.

1 Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 1:327–28.

1. The Translated Passages

This publication contains thirty-two discreet passages of Ṭabarī's Qur'ānic commentary in translation. The selection of *sūras* and verses was made by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, in Amman, Jordan, which generously commissioned this project. Some of the passages, such as Ṭabarī's lengthy Introduction to his commentary and his explanation of the mysterious "disconnected letters" at the beginning of numerous *sūras*, are of interest primarily for scholarly reasons. However, most of the Qur'ānic passages are associated with special blessings or qualities, called *faḍā'il*. As I mentioned previously, Ṭabarī evinces no interest in his commentary in the genre of *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, which has deep roots in the *Ḥadīth* tradition and was the title for one of the earliest books in Islam, the *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* by Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām.[1]

The following passages are associated with special blessings or qualities according to *ḥadīth*s and early religious authorities:[2]

Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (The Opening, 1)

In several sound *ḥadīth*s, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) described this *sūra* as the "greatest *sūra* of the Qur'ān" and declared that prayer without its recitation is invalid.[3] In a "weak" *ḥadīth*, he allegedly said, "Four [*sūras*] were sent down from treasure beneath the Throne: the Mother of the Book [Sūrat al-Fātiḥa], the Verse of the Throne (Q.2:255), the final verses of Sūrat al-Baqara (The Cow, 2) and Sūrat al-Kawthar (Abundance, 108)."[4]

The Verse of the Throne (Q.2:255)

According to Tirmidhī, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Whoever recites the first three verses of [Sūra 40] and the Verse of the Throne when he wakes up in the morning will be protected by them until the evening. And whoever recites them in the evening will

1 See Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, ed. Marwān al-ʿAṭiyya et al. (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2000).

2 Readers interested in additional information regarding the *faḍā'il* of the Qur'ān should consult *al-Kitāb al-jāmiʿ li-faḍā'il al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, produced by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought. This book is available online: http://altafsir.com/Books/Fadael_AlQuran.pdf.

3 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ li-faḍā'il al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, 32–33. The sources for these *ḥadīth*s include the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Bukhārī and Muslim.

4 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 36. This *ḥadīth* is found in Ṭabarānī's *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*.

be protected by them until the morning." The Prophet also identified it as the greatest verse in the Qur'ān and recommended reciting it at the time one lies down for sleep at night.[1]

The Final Three Verses of Sūrat al-Baqara (Q.2:284–286)

According to several *ḥadīth*s, the final two verses of Sūrat al-Baqara provide protection against Satan and prevent him from entering one's house. One narration in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* reports that the Prophet received these verses during his Ascension, along with the five daily prayers and the promise that his community would be forgiven so long as it did not associate partners with God.[2]

The Verse About the *Muḥkamāt* and the *Mutashābihāt* (Q.3:7)

This verse is of interest on account of the robust debate among Muslim scholars over the meaning and identity of the Qur'ānic verses that are "clear (*muḥkama*)" or "ambiguous (*mutashābiha*)".

God testifies that there is no God save Him (Q.3:18)

According to Ibn Ḥanbal, this verse was one among many passages that the Prophet used in order to heal a Bedouin's ill brother.[3]

The second of two; when they two were in the cave (Q.9:38–40)

This passage is of interest because it refers to the Prophet's Emigration from Mecca to Medina. The "second of two" is generally understood to be Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, the first adult male Muslim convert to Islam, and the first caliph after the Prophet.

The Final Two Verses of Sūrat al-Tawba (Q.9:128–129)

According to Abū Dāwūd, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Whoever recites [the final verse of Sūrat al-Tawba] seven times in the morning and evening, God will suffice for whatever sorrows him, whether he [recited it] sincerely or insincerely."[4]

The Story of Moses and Khaḍir (Q.18:60–82)

This is among the more famous and mysterious "stories of the Prophets", and is frequently deployed to illustrate the relationship between a Sufi master and his disciple. Muslims are encouraged to recite the entire Sūrat

1 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 41.
2 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 43–44.
3 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 46–47.
4 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 57.

al-Kahf (The Cave, 18) each Friday in order to receive divine illumination, according to at least one *ḥadīth*.[1]

The Light Verse (Q.24:35–42)

The Light Verse (Q.24:35) and the verses immediately following it contain some of the more complex similitudes offered in the Qur'ān, and provide insight into the skills of the exegete.

Sūrat al-Sajda (Q. 32)

According to Bukhārī and Muslim, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) would recite this *sūra* and Sūrat al-Insān (Man, 76) during the daybreak prayer on Fridays. Another *ḥadīth* reports that the Prophet would not go to sleep until he had recited Sūrat al-Sajda and Sūrat al-Mulk (Sovereignty, 67) each night.[2]

Sūrat Yā' Sīn (Q. 36)

According to a "weak" *ḥadīth*, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Truly everything has a heart, and truly the heart of the Qur'ān is Yā' Sīn. Whoever recites it, it is as if he has recited the Qur'ān ten times."[3] There are also *ḥadīth*s encouraging Muslims to recite this *sūra* in the presence of the deceased Muslim and during any hardships they face.

Truly God forgives sins altogether (Q.39:53–55).

This verse is considered among the most compassionate verses of the Qur'ān, as can be seen from Ṭabarī's commentary on it, below.

Sūrat al-Dukhān (Q. 44)

According to a "weak" *ḥadīth* narrated by Tirmidhī, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Whoever recites Sūrat al-Dukhān at night will wake up with 70,000 angels seeking forgiveness on his behalf."[4]

Sūrat al-Raḥmān (Q. 55)

In a "weak" *ḥadīth* narrated by Bayhaqī, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) allegedly said, "Everything has a bride, and the bride

1 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 65. In Abū 'Ubayd's *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* (p. 244), the merit of reciting Sūrat al-Kahf on Friday is declared by the Companion Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, instead of the Prophet.
2 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 75–76.
3 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 77.
4 *Kitāb al-jāmi'*, 89.

of the Qur'ān is Sūrat al-Raḥmān." There is also a fair report that the Prophet recited this *sūra* in his *witr* prayer.[1]

Sūrat al-Wāqiʿa (Q. 56)

The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) identified this *sūra* among a small group of *sūra*s that caused his hair to turn grey. There is also a "weak" *ḥadīth* in which he said, "Whoever recites Sūrat al-Wāqiʿa every night will never be afflicted by poverty", and he may have recited this *sūra* in his daybreak and *witr* prayers.[2]

Sūrat al-Ḥadīd (Q. 57)

According to a "weak" *ḥadīth* narrated by Ṭabarānī, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) allegedly said, "God sent down Sūrat al-Ḥadīd on a Wednesday; He created iron on a Wednesday; Adam's son killed his brother on a Wednesday"; and the Messenger of God forbade cupping on Wednesdays.[3]

The Final Three Verses of Sūrat al-Ḥashr (Q.59:18-24)

According to a "fair" *ḥadīth* in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "God will assign 70,000 angels to say blessings on behalf of the person who, in the morning, says three times, 'I seek refuge in God, the Hearing, the Knowing, from the accursed Satan,' then recites the final three verses of Sūrat al-Ḥashr. [These angels will say blessings on behalf of him] until the evening, and if this person dies during that day, he will die as a martyr. Whoever says this in the evening will be of the same status."[4]

Sūrat al-Mulk (Q. 67)

According to a "fair" *ḥadīth*, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Truly there is a *sūra* in the Qur'ān, with thirty verses, that will intercede on behalf of the person who knows it, to the point that he will be forgiven. It is the *sūra* [that begins with] *Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Sovereignty*." In another "fair" *ḥadīth*, he indicated that this *sūra* protects the believer from the Punishment of the Grave. There is also a report that the Prophet would not go to sleep until he had recited Sūrat al-Sajda and Sūrat al-Mulk each night.[5]

1 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 101.
2 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 103. The *ḥadīth* is found also in Abū ʿUbayd, *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*, 257.
3 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 105.
4 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 107.
5 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 113–14.

Sūrat al-Qiyāma (Q. 75)

The Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb allegedly said, "If anyone asks about Resurrection Day, then let him read this *sūra*."[1]

Sūrat al-Aʿlā (Q. 87)

Muslim reports that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) would recite this *sūra* during the midday prayer, the Festival prayer and the Friday congregational prayer. There are also reports in other sources that the Prophet would recite this *sūra* in the first unit of his *witr* prayer and in the rain prayer (*istisqāʾ*). The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) reprimanded Muʿādh once for reciting a long *sūra* in a communal prayer he was leading, and encouraged him to recite a *sūra* like Sūrat al-Aʿlā instead of a long one.[2]

Sūrat al-Shams (Q. 91)

This *sūra* may have been recited by the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) in his night-time prayer, and he identified it as an appropriate-length *sūra* to recite in prayers more generally.[3]

Sūrat al-Layl (Q. 92)

According to Muslim, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) recited this *sūra* in his midday prayer and recited a *sūra* like it in his afternoon prayer.[4]

Sūrat al-Zalzala (Q. 99)

In a *ḥadīth* which al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī claims to be "sound", the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "*When the earth is shaken with her earthquake* [Q.99] is equal to half the Qur'ān; *Say: He is God, One* [Q.112] is equal to one-third of the Qur'ān; and *Say: O disbelievers!* [Q.109] is equal to one-fourth of the Qur'ān." In a different *ḥadīth*, the Prophet stated that Sūrat al-Zalzala was equal to one-fourth of the Qur'ān. According to ʿAlī, this was one of nine short *sūra*s that the Prophet recited in his *witr* prayers.[5]

1 Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:463.
2 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 137–39.
3 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 142.
4 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 143.
5 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 149. ʿAlī's *ḥadīth* concerning the *witr* prayer is found in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, Ṭaḥāwī's *Sharḥ maʿānī al-āthār* and the *Musnad* of Bazzār. The editors of *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ* evaluate it as "sound".

Sūrat al-ʿĀdiyāt (Q. 100)

In a *mursal ḥadīth*[1] from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "*When [the earth] is shaken* [Q.99] is equal to half the Qur'ān, and *By the Chargers* [Q.100] is equal to half the Qur'ān."[2]

Sūrat al-Takāthur (Q. 102)

According to al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Is there not one of you who can recite 1,000 verses every day?" [The Companions] said, "Who can do that?" He said, "Is there not one of you who can recite *Rivalry (in worldly increase) distracts you* [Q.102]?" According to ʿAlī, this was one of nine short *sūras* that the Prophet recited in his *witr* prayers.[3]

Sūrat al-Kāfirūn (Q. 109)

The aforementioned *ḥadīth* that was cited in relation to Q.99 is applicable here. Other Companions report that he recited Sūrat al-Kāfirūn in his second unit of *witr* prayer, in his prayer during circumambulation of the Kaʿba in Mecca, and in his supererogatory prayers more generally.[4]

Sūrat al-Naṣr (Q. 110)

Tirmidhī narrates a long "fair" *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) described this *sūra* as being equal to one-fourth of the Qur'ān. According to ʿAlī, this was one of nine short *sūras* that the Prophet recited in his *witr* prayers.[5]

Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ (Q. 112)

Mālik and Bukhārī report that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said that this *sūra* was equal to one-third of the Qur'ān. Muslim and Tirmidhī narrate that the Prophet said, "Is there anyone who is incapable of reciting one-third of the Qur'ān in a single night?" [The Companions] said, "How can anyone recite one-third of the Qur'ān?" He replied, "*Say: He is God, One* [Q.112] is equal to one-third of the Qur'ān." Again, the aforementioned *ḥadīth* that was cited in relation to Q.99 is applicable here. According to ʿAlī, this was one of nine short *sūras* that the Prophet recited in his *witr* prayers. Other Companions

1 For an explanation of *mursal*, see below in the "Translator's Conventions".
2 Abū ʿUbayd, *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*, 263.
3 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 151.
4 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 155–56.
5 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 159.

report that the Prophet would recite this *sūra* in the third unit of his *witr* prayer, in the second unit of the prayer during the circumambulation of the Kaʿba in Mecca, and in supererogatory prayers more generally.[1]

Sūrat al-Falaq (Q. 113) and Sūrat al-Nās (Q. 114)

These two final *sūras* of the Qur'ān are called "The two [*sūras*] of seeking refuge [in God]" or the *muʿawwidhatān*. Bukhārī reports that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) would recite the *sūras* of Sincerity, Daybreak and the People every night prior to going to bed. Other *ḥadīths* relate that the Prophet encouraged Muslims to recite these latter two *sūras* after the obligatory prayers, in the morning and evening, and declared them to be the best way for a person to seek refuge in God.[2]

2. Previous Translations of Ṭabarī's Commentary

Two earlier abridged translations of selections of Ṭabarī's commentary proved helpful in the course of this project:

a) The first volume of John Cooper's projected five-volume abridgement of *The Comprehensive Exposition*, which was the only volume to be published prior to his untimely death in 1998, includes an abridged translation of Ṭabarī's long Introduction, Sūrat al-Fātiḥa and the first 103 verses of Sūrat al-Baqara. Cooper based his translation on the 1957–69 critical edition of Ṭabarī's commentary by Aḥmad and Maḥmūd Shākir. This volume was edited by Wilferd Madelung and Alan Jones and published under the title of *The Commentary of the Qur'ān by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī* by Oxford University Press in 1987.

b) The first volume of *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, subtitled "On the Nature of the Divine", edited by Feras Hamza and Sajjad Rizvi, with Farhana Mayer, includes abridged translations of Ṭabarī's commentary on the Verse of the Throne (Q.2:255), The Light Verse (Q.24:35) and Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ (Q.112). The translation claims to be based on a 30-volume edition of Ṭabarī's commentary edited by Aḥmad and Maḥmūd Shākir, which is unlikely because the Shākir edition is incomplete and only reaches Sūra 14. I think the correct reference should be to the 1954–1968 Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī edition. The *Anthology* was published by Oxford University Press, in association with the Institute for Ismaili Studies, in 2008.

1 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 161.
2 *Kitāb al-jāmiʿ*, 169–70.

3. Print Editions of *The Comprehensive Exposition* Used for This Translation

This translation is based on the 27-volume, 2001 critical edition, titled *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, edited by ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī and the Markaz al-Buḥūth waʾl-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya waʾl-Islāmiyya bi-Dār Hajar in Cairo. This magnificent edition is based on the incomplete 4th/10th-century Fez manuscript of Ṭabarī's commentary and resolves many of the difficulties found in the earlier print editions of this text. It contains extensive cross-referencing for the thousands of reports Ṭabarī narrates in his commentary, as well as valuable internal cross-referencing, such as when Ṭabarī frequently says "I discussed this point earlier" without indicating where he actually did this. This edition also identifies many, although not all, places where Ṭabarī quotes without attribution from *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* by al-Farrāʾ and Abū ʿUbayda's *Majāz al-Qurʾān*. It is, however, less helpful in elucidating the meaning of the poetry Ṭabarī cites. This edition was republished by Dār ʿĀlam al-Kutub in Riyadh in 2003, and is held by fewer than a dozen libraries in the United States. Fortunately, the original 2001 Dār Hajar edition is currently available online: https://archive.org/details/TafsirTabariTurki.

I have consulted the 1957–69 critical edition by Aḥmad and Maḥmūd Shākir, titled *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*. It has many useful notes, especially regarding the poetry Ṭabarī cites.

The 1954–68 Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī edition remains useful, primarily for the elucidation of the poetry Ṭabarī cites after Sūra 14, where the Shākir brothers' edition ends.

4. Translator's Conventions

I adopted the following conventions throughout the translation of Ṭabarī's commentary, with the intention of making it more accessible to the educated reader.

a) The translation of the Qurʾān is based on the *Meaning of the Glorious Koran* by M. M. Pickthall, with slight modifications. Whenever Ṭabarī's interpretation of a word differs from Pickthall's translation, I have adopted Ṭabarī's interpretation and indicated in a footnote how Pickthall, A. J. Arberry, M. Asad and M. A. S. Abdel Haleem have translated the word or passage in question. Qurʾānic citations are put in italics throughout this translation.

b) Like most Muslim scholars, Ṭabarī habitually writes blessings after the mention of God, the Prophet and the Companions of the Prophet. I have translated in full the blessings he makes in reference to God, but abbreviated the standard blessing for the Prophet Muḥammad, *ṣallāʾllāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama*,[1] as "(ṣ)" and for the Companions, *raḍiya'llāhu ʿanhu/hā*,[2] as "(r)".

c) Ṭabarī generally does not specify which Qurʾān reciters adopted variant readings, preferring instead to say "One (or some) of the Kufans recited" or "One of the Medinans recited". In the footnotes, I have identified which specific Qurʾān reciters adopted each reading, primarily on the basis of Ibn ʿAṭiyya's (d. 546/1151–52) Qurʾānic commentary, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-ʿazīz*, which records the opinions of an impressive number of Qurʾān reciters. Ibn ʿAṭiyya was a native of Granada and inherited the famous Andalusian tradition of Qurʾānic recitation, much of which he preserves in his commentary.

d) In the translations of the *isnāds*, I have not drawn a distinction between direct and indirect transmission and merely written an em dash in place of *ḥaddathanā* or *ʿan*. Readers interested in this distinction should consult the original Arabic text.

e) In the interest of space and utility, I have only identified Ṭabarī's teachers and the religious authorities whose opinions he quotes in Appendix B and Appendix C, respectively. In other words, only the first name in each *isnād* and the last name has been identified, and these men and women are discussed in the appendices, rather than the first time their names appear in the translation. Readers interested in other names occurring in the *isnād*s should consult the standard Arabic biographical dictionaries.

f) I have provided minimal cross-referencing for the *ḥadīth* in the translation, and have refrained from providing any cross-referencing for the Companion and Successor opinions. I have used Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-manthūr fīʾl-tafsīr* [*bi-*] *al-maʾthūr* to indicate what additional sources contain a version of each *ḥadīth* that Ṭabarī cites, relatively few of which are found in the six canonical collections.[3] In the interest of space, I have not provided detailed cross-referencing for these *ḥadīth*s, because

1 "May God bless (or have mercy on) him and shower him with greetings of peace".

2 "May God be pleased with him/her".

3 Unfortunately, until very recently, I was unaware of the superior, critical edition of *al-Durr al-manthūr*, published under the editorial leadership of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, and available online at: https://archive.org/details/eldorrelmanthor. All references in these volumes are to the commercial, unedited Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya edition.

these references are provided exhaustively in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's commentary.

g) Ṭabarī narrates many *ḥadīths* that are *mursal*, meaning the Successor reports a *ḥadīth* from the Prophet without mentioning the name of the Companion from whom he heard it. Jurists differ over whether *mursal* reports can be used as evidence for Islamic law and theology; in general, Ṭabarī does not consider them to be strong evidence. I have endeavoured to identify which *ḥadīths* are *mursal* in the footnotes.

h) No effort has been made to render the verses of poetry into verse or meter, as they serve a purely philological function in *The Comprehensive Exposition*. I have made an effort to use the specialist translations by A. J. Arberry, Michael Sells and Edward Lane where possible. All of the poets whom Ṭabarī cites are identified in Appendix D.

i) I have often used the device of presenting certain parts—even a single letter, if necessary—of italicized citations in roman script; and vice versa when a text is in roman and it requires the same technique of emphasis. The main goal of this has been to vividly illustrate the particular grammatical point that the author is trying to highlight.

j) The reader will note that each passage of commentary ends with the remark "Conclusion of the commentary on...". This statement does not appear at the end of each passage in the original. For the sake of clarity and consistency, I have added the statement in square brackets wherever it was missing.

k) I have endeavoured to render Ṭabarī's Arabic into idiomatic English that is as literal as possible. However, I have departed consistently from the literal Arabic in the following cases:

1. It was common practice in classical Islamic books for an author's book to be read back to him and for his name to appear repeatedly throughout the text. For the sake of maximum clarity, and in order to avoid any potential confusion, this classical convention has been dispensed with.
2. Ṭabarī generally begins each section of commentary with the following Arabic expression: *al-qawl fī ta'wīl qawlihi taʿālā*, which literally means, "The statement concerning the interpretation of His statement, Exalted is He." I have rendered this as "COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS".

Frequently, Ṭabarī subdivides the sections of his commentary with the Arabic expression: *wa qawluhu* ("His statement"), followed by the clause or word from the Qur'ānic verse under discussion. I have rendered this as "INTERPRETATION OF".

3. A standard rhetorical formula in Islamic theology is *fa'in qāla qā'il... qila lahu*, which literally means, "If a speaker were to say... it would be said to him." I have rendered this stylistic device in small caps as "QUESTION" (or "OBJECTION") and "RESPONSE".
4. In order to help the reader keep track of the disagreements Ṭabarī records over the meaning of specific passages, I have inserted in small caps "OPINION" into the translation. These words do not appear in the Arabic text. This is also the case for "ERRONEOUS OPINION." These words do not appear in the Arabic text.
5. In many passages, I have inserted Ṭabarī's name into the translation in order to clarify his personal interpretation from those of the earlier exegetes whom he cites. In these cases, where his name is not actually in the text, his name appears in small caps as "ṬABARĪ SAID".

IV. CONCLUSION

Behind the heavy mass of *isnāds*, variant Qur'ānic readings and grammatical arguments dispersed throughout *The Comprehensive Exposition*, there exists a probing mind, constantly juggling thousands of fragments of the early Islamic tradition, and shaping them into a monumental text, several thousand pages long. Ṭabarī's own opinions and arguments are couched in an idiom of Arabic that had not yet emerged as the refined, classical language of learning and scholarship. One regularly encounters a dense forest of prepositions and pronouns, and, as was the custom of his day, long sentences that simply must be broken up when brought into English. Perhaps one of his most subtle stylistic devices, noted by Franz Rosenthal, is Ṭabarī's use of the expression "the opinion which is most likely correct (*awlā'l-aqwāl... bi'l-ṣawāb*)" to indicate his preferred opinion in cases of exegetical disagreement. This expression acknowledges that Qur'ānic exegesis, like Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), is a field dominated by probability, rather than certainty. It evokes a degree of humility on the part of Ṭabarī, who, after travelling thousands of miles

and collecting tens of thousands of *isnād*-supported reports, can only inform the reader of which opinion is most likely correct. Certainty, as it relates to the Qur'ān's correct meaning, belongs to God and His final Prophet, Muḥammad. Scrupulous scholars, like Ṭabarī, can go no further than its probable meaning.

In his entry on Ṭabarī in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the late C. E. Bosworth wrote, "It may be doubted whether any modern translation can convey the subtlety of al-Ṭabarī's thought and scholarship except in a very circuitous and prolix fashion." I concur with this sentiment and have struggled to balance clarity with fidelity to Ṭabarī's unique Arabic style. It has been a privilege to bring selections of Ṭabarī's Qur'ānic commentary into English, and I sincerely hope future translators will improve and expand upon what they find in these pages.

THE SMOKE
SŪRAT AL-DUKHĀN
(Q. 44:1–59)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:1] *Ḥā' Mīm.* [44:2] *By the Book that makes clear!* [44:3] *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night. Lo! We are ever warning.* [44:4] *In it every flawless command is made clear,* [44:5] *As a command from Our presence. Lo! We are ever sending—* [44:6] *A mercy from your Lord. Lo! He, even He is the Hearer, the Knower*

ṬABARĪ SAID: We have already offered our explanation of the meaning of His statement *Ḥā' Mīm. By the Book that makes clear!*[1]

[EXCURSUS: Ṭabarī's Commentary on Q.40:1][2]

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of His statement *Ḥā' Mīm.*

OPINION: Some of them said: These are disconnected letters, from the Name of God, Who is the Most Gracious (*al-Raḥmān*); so they are the *ḥā'* and *mīm* from this Name.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Shabbuwayh al-Marwazī—ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—my father—Yazīd—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*Alif Lām Rā', Ḥā' Mīm,* and *Nūn* are disconnected letters from the [Divine Name] The Most Gracious (*al-Raḥmān*)."

OPINION: Others said: [*Ḥā' Mīm*] is an oath by which God swears, and it is one of God's Names.

1 According to Ṭabarī, *the book that makes clear* (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*) is "a book wherein lies the clear exposition of all that they (Christians and Jews) have disagreed over, concerning God's oneness, what He has declared lawful, what He has declared unlawful and the laws of His religion. This is the Qur'ān, which God sent down to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), in order to clarify for humanity all of what they need to know, concerning religious matters, so that they can apprehend [religious] truth from [religious] falsehood." This is Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.5:15; see Dār Hajar 8:264.

2 See 20:274–276 in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*Ḥā' Mīm* is an oath by which God swears, and it is one of God's Names."

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn [al-Baghdādī]—Aḥmad b. al-Mufaḍḍal [al-Kūfī]—Asbāṭ [b. Naṣr]—Suddī said, concerning His statement *Ḥā' Mīm*, "[They are] among the letters of the Names of God."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, it is one of the names of the Qur'ān.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*Ḥā' Mīm* is one of the names of the Qur'ān."

OPINION: Others said: They are letters of the alphabet.

OPINION: Others said: "Rather, [*Ḥā' Mīm*] is a name."

They base this interpretation upon the verse by Shurayḥ b. [Abī] Awfā al-ʿAbsī:[1]

Q. 44:1

yudhakkirunī ḥāmīma wa'l-rumḥa shājirun
fa-hallā talā ḥā' mīma qabla'l-taqaddumi[2]

My opponent reminds me of *Sūrat Ḥā' Mīm*, while the spear is thrust,
Shouldn't [my opponent] have recited this *sūra* prior to attacking me?

Likewise, al-Kumayt recited,

wajadnā la-kum fī Āli Ḥāmīma āyatan
ta'awwalahā minnā taqiyyun wa mu'ribu

We found a sign for you among the *sūras* beginning with *Ḥā' Mīm* which was interpreted by one practising dissimulation and an open partisan from among us.

ṬABARĪ SAID: I was informed on the authority of [Abū ʿUbayda] Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā that Yūnus—meaning Yūnus al-Jarmī—said, "Whoever accepts this opinion has erred because *Ḥā' Mīm* has *sukūn*s on its letters (instead of short vowels), just like the letters of the alphabet, whereas

1 This opinion and the following two verses of poetry are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:193. Abū ʿUbayda gives the poet's name as Shurayḥ b. Abī Awfā al-ʿAbsī; ibid. Ṭabarī presents his name as Shurayḥ b. Awfā al-ʿAbsī in his *Tafsīr* and *Tārikh*; for example, see Dār Hajar 20:275; and Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. XVII: The First Civil War*, translated by G. R. Hawting (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 115–6 and 130–3.

2 I have modified this verse of poetry in the manner suggested by Dr Adel Gamal, which is also how it appears in *Majāz al-Qur'ān*.

sūra names have short vowels. If these letters really were *sūra* names, they would require some type of case endings."[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The interpretation of *Ḥā' Mīm*, in my estimation, is equivalent to the interpretation of its related verses, which I have already explained exhaustively regarding His statement *Alif Lām Mīm*.[2] There is no need to repeat it here, if we agree that *Ḥā' Mīm* and all of the passages in the Qur'ān consisting of individual letters like this can be interpreted in the same manner.

[CONCLUSION OF EXCURSUS]

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night*

Our Lord (Majestic is His praise) swore by this book (the Qur'ān) that He sent it down *on a blessed night*.

There is disagreement over which night of the year this is.

OPINION: Some of them said: It is the Night of Power.[3]

Q. 44:3

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night*, "[Meaning] the Night of Power. The pages of Abraham came down on the first night of Ramaḍān; the Torah came down on the 6TH night of Ramaḍān; the Psalms came down on the 12TH of Ramaḍān; the Gospel came down on the 18TH of Ramaḍān; and the *Furqān* came down on the 24TH of Ramaḍān."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *on a blessed night*, "It is the Night of Power."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night. Lo! We are ever warning*, "This is the Night of Power. God sent down this Qur'ān from the Mother of the Book on the Night of Power. Then He sent it down it to His Prophet[4] on [many] nights and days other than the Night of Power."

1 Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:194. This is one of the relatively few cases I have come across in which Ṭabarī openly quotes Abū ʿUbayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān*. The *isnād* suggests that he read this book on his own, without the direct instruction of a teacher.

2 See Appendix A of this volume for Ṭabarī's commentary on the disconnected letters, which appears in his *tafsīr* on Q.2:1.

3 For more on the Night of Power, see Sūrat al-Qadr (97). This night is considered to be the holiest night of the month of Ramaḍān.

4 The manuscripts have "Prophets" in the plural; the editors of the Dār Hajar edition base their emendation on a parallel report found in Qurṭubī's *Tafsīr*; Dār Hajar, 21:6 (note 4).

OPINION: Others said: Rather, this is the night in the middle of the month of Shaʿbān.[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that is that the Night of Power is intended by [this verse] because God (Exalted is His remembrance) informed us of this, by means of His statement, *Lo! We sent it down on the Night of Power* (Q.97:1).[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! We are ever warning*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo! We are ever warning* Our creation by means of this book, which *We sent down on the blessed night*, about Our terrible punishment that will afflict all who disbelieve among them and do not turn in repentance to accept Our oneness and Our exclusive claim to divinity.

INTERPRETATION OF *In it every flawless command is made clear*

Q. 44:4

The interpreters disagreed over which night *every flawless command is made clear* along the same division as to the identification of *a blessed night* in the previous verse. This is because of the pronoun *hāʾ* in His statement *fihā* (*In it*), which refers back to the *blessed night*.

OPINION: Some of them said: It is the Night of Power, for in it everything for the entire coming year is decreed, [such as] who will die, who will be born, who will be honoured, who will be abased, and everything else during that year.

An account of those who said that:

Mujāhid b. Mūsā—Yazīd—Rabīʿa b. Kulthūm said, "I was with al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] when a man said to him, 'O Abū Saʿīd [al-Ḥasan], is the Night of Power in every Ramaḍān?' Al-Ḥasan replied, 'Yes, by God, it occurs every Ramaḍān and it is the night in which *every flawless command is made clear*. In it, God decrees every lifespan, hope and provision until the [next Night of Power].'"

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Rabīʿa b. Kulthūm said, "I heard a man say to al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī], 'In your opinion, is there a Night of Power in every Ramaḍān?' Al-Ḥasan replied, 'Yes, by God Whom

1 Shaʿbān is the month prior to Ramaḍān in the Muslim calendar. See below for the early authorities who interpreted this verse as a reference to the middle of Shaʿbān.

2 Following the editors of the Dār Hajar edition; 21:6. The point Ṭabarī is making is that both verses share the same syntax—*innā anzalnāhu fi X*—which implies that *a blessed night* is the *Night of Power*.

there is no god save He, the Night of Power occurs every Ramaḍān. Truly it is the night in which *every flawless command is made clear*. In it, God decrees every lifespan, deed and provision until [the next Night of Power].'"

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd—ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Sālim—ʿUmar, the *mawlā* of Ghufra,[1] said, "It has been alleged that on the Night of Power the angel of death copies the list of people who will die [in the coming year], because God (Mighty and Majestic is He) says, *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night* and *In it every flawless command is made clear*. He said: You will find in it, among those who will die, the name of a man who marries women and cultivates his fields."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Salama—Abū Mālik said, concerning His statement *In it every flawless command is made clear*, "The affairs of one year to the next [are made clear]: creation, provision, death, calamities, and the like."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ḥabīb—Hilāl b. Yisāf said, "It is said, 'Wait for the decree during the month of Ramaḍān.'" Q. 44:4

Al-Faḍl b. al-Ṣabbāḥ—Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl—Ḥuṣayn—Saʿd b. ʿUbayda—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān said, concerning His statement *In it every flawless command is made clear*, "On the Night of Power, God arranges all of the affairs for the coming year."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *In it every flawless command is made clear*, "On the Night of Power everything in the coming year [is made clear]: life and death,[2] and all of the coming provisions and calamities are determined."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night*, the Night of Power; *In it every flawless command is made clear*—we have been informed that on this night God makes clear all of His commands for the entire coming year."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "It is the Night of Power; in it all that will happen in the coming year is decreed."

1 Following the *isnād* proposed by the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, 21:7.

2 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition insert the exceptive particle *illā* prior to "life and death", on the basis of corroborating reports in other texts, which means that everything *except* life and death is decreed on this night; 21:8 (note 5). The manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* do not support this emendation, so I have not made it.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr [b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd]—Manṣūr said,

> I asked Mujāhid, "Do you think that the following supplication to God will have any effect? 'O God, if my name is among those who will be saved (*suʿadāʾ*), keep it there! And if my name is among those who will suffer damnation (*ashqiyāʾ*), then erase it from that list and put it on the list of those who will be saved.'" [Mujāhid] said, "It is good." [Manṣūr] said: Then a year or more passed until I met him again and asked him about the efficacy of this supplication. Mujāhid recited, *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night. Lo! We are ever warning. In it every flawless command is made clear.* Then he said, "On the Night of Power, God decrees all that will happen in the coming year, like provisions and calamities. Then He brings forth what He wills, and postpones what He wills. The decree of the saved and damned is fixed and unalterable."

Q. 44:4

OPINION: Others said: Rather, it is the middle night of the month of Shaʿbān.

An account of those who said that:

Al-Faḍl b. al-Ṣabbāḥ and al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa said: We were informed by al-Naḍr b. Ismāʿīl al-Bajalī—Muḥammad b. Sūqa—ʿIkrima said, concerning God's statement *In it every flawless command is made clear*, "On the middle night of the month of Shaʿbān, God thoroughly arranges all of the affairs of the coming year and the living are recorded [and distinguished] from those who will die. [The names of] those who will make the Ḥajj are written, and not a single person is added to or subtracted from [this list of pilgrims]."

ʿUbayd b. Ādam b. Abī Iyās—my father—al-Layth [b. Saʿd]—ʿUqayl b. Khālid—Ibn Shihāb [al-Zuhrī]—ʿUthmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Mughīra b. al-Akhnas said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "All of the year's death dates are fixed during the month of Shaʿbān each year; and even a man who is about to marry and have a child—his name has been put out among those who will die."[1]

Muḥammad b. Maʿmar—Abū Hishām—ʿAbd al-Wāḥid—ʿUthmān b. Ḥakīm—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said: Ibn ʿAbbās said, "A man may just be

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *mursal ḥadīth* is found only in Ṭabarī's commentary and Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-īmān*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:740. ʿUthmān b. Muḥammad did not meet any Companions, so there are at least two narrators missing between him and the Prophet; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:445–6.

walking among the people when he is suddenly hastened to death." Then he recited the verse, *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night. Lo! We are ever warning. In it every flawless command is made clear.* He then said, "On this night, God makes clear the affairs of the temporal world for the entire coming year."[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion which is most likely to be correct is to say: This is the Night of Power, on the basis of what we have already elucidated concerning the identification of His statement *Lo! We sent it down on a blessed night* with the Night of Power. The object pronoun *hāʾ* ("it") in His statement *In it* refers back to this blessed night. What is meant by His statement *In it every flawless command is made clear* is that on this blessed night, every one of God's commands for the coming year until the following Night of Power is decreed and clarified. The Arabic word *ḥakīm* acquires the meaning of *muḥkam* ("flawless") here, just like the verses, *Alif Lām Mīm. These are the signs of the flawless Book* (Q.31:1–2).

Q. 44:5

INTERPRETATION OF *As a command from Our presence. Lo! We are ever sending.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: In this blessed night *every flawless command is made clear, as a command from Our presence* (*amran min ʿindinā*).

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over why *command* (*amran*) is in the accusative case. One Basran grammarian[2] said: *Amran* is a *ḥāl* clause governed by the preceding verb *innā anzalnāhu* [in Q.44:2], such that it means "Lo! We sent it down as a command and a mercy." A Kufan grammarian[3] said: It is in the accusative case to convey the meaning "every command is made clear in a clear and commanding manner."[4] The same interpretation applies to *A mercy from your Lord* (Q.44:6). It is also possible that *raḥma* ("mercy") is in the accusative because it is governed by *We are ever sending* (*mursilīn*); in this case, "mercy" is given the meaning of "the Prophet (ṣ)".[5]

1 Note that there is no indication in this report that this night is in the middle of Shaʿbān.

2 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* report that all of the manuscripts erroneously have "Kufan" instead of "Basran" and that this is the opinion of the Basran al-Akhfash; 21:11 (note 1). This position is also stated by al-Akhfash in his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:691.

3 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition correct "Basran" to "Kufan" here, since this is the opinion of al-Farrāʾ; 21:11 (note 2). This position is also stated by al-Farrāʾ in his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:39.

4 Arabic: *yufraqu kullu amrin farqan wa-amran*; Dār Hajar, 21:11.

5 In Q.21:107, the Prophet Muḥammad is described as being sent as "a mercy for the worlds", so it is not far-fetched to consider the word "mercy" in this verse to be a reference to Muḥammad.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! We are ever sending. Lo!* **He, even He is the** *Hearer, the Knower*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O Muḥammad (ṣ), **We are** continually sending Our Messenger Muḥammad (ṣ) to Our servants as a mercy from Your Lord—*Lo! He, even He is the Hearer, the Knower*. He says: **Truly** God (Blessed and Exalted is He) is *the Hearer* of all that these polytheists **say** about Our Book [that] We have sent down, as well as their comments about the Messengers We have sent to them, and anything else that they **say** (or anyone else says). He is *the Knower* of all that is buried deep in their consciences (*ḍamā'iruhum*) and their affairs, as well as the affairs of everyone **else.**

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:7] *Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you would be sure.* [44:8] *There is no God save Him. He brings life and gives death; your Lord and Lord of your forefathers.* [44:9] *Nay, but they play in doubt.*

Q. 44:5-7

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of His statement *Lord of the heavens and the earth*. Most Medinan and Basran reciters read *rabbu'l-samāwāt* in the nominative case, in order to be consistent with *He is the Hearer, the Knower*[1] in the previous verse. However, most of the Kufan and some of the Meccan reciters read *rabbi'l-samāwāt* in the genitive case, in order to be consistent with *A mercy from your Lord*,[2] also in the previous verse.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both readings are well known and sound in meaning, so the reciter would be correct reading whichever one he chooses.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) means by *Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them*: O Muḥammad, the One Who sent down this Book to you and sent you to these polytheists *as a mercy from your Lord* is

1 Arabic: *innahu huwa'l-sami'u'l-'alimu*. Ibn 'Aṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ibn Kathīr, Nāfi', Abū 'Amr and Ibn 'Āmir, al-A'raj, Ibn Abī Isḥāq, Abū Ja'far and Shayba; *al-Muharrar al-wajiz*, 5:69. Ibn 'Aṭiyya interprets this reading on the basis of *Lord* being the start of a new sentence, which is different from Ṭabarī's explanation. Al-Farrā' offers both explanations for reading *rabbu* in *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān*, 3:39.

2 Arabic: *rahmatan min rabbika*. Ibn 'Aṭiyya ascribes this reading to 'Āṣim, Ḥamza, Kisā'ī, Ibn Muḥaysin and al-A'mash; *al-Muharrar al-wajiz*, 5:69.

the Owner (*mālik*) of the seven *heavens and the earth and all*—absolutely everything—*that is between them.*

INTERPRETATION OF *if you would be sure*

He says: If only you all would be sure of the reality of what I have informed you—that your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth—and that I informed you that God is the One Who has these attributes; that this Qur'ān is His revelation; and that Muḥammad (ṣ) is His Messenger. All of this is a most certain reality (*ḥaqq yaqīn*), so be sure of it, just as you are certain of the realities of other things.

INTERPRETATION OF *There is no God save Him. He brings life and gives death*

He says: O humanity, nothing may be the object of your worship other than the *Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them*. So do not worship anything else! Worship of anything else does not count as worship. Do not seek anything other than Him. *He brings life and gives death*. He says: He is the One Who brings to life whomever He wishes and He gives death to whomever He wishes among the living.

Q. 44:7-9

INTERPRETATION OF *your Lord and Lord of your forefathers*

He says: [God] is your Owner and the Owner of all who passed prior to you among *your forefathers*. He says: The One Who has this quality is the Lord, so worship Him instead of your [false] gods, who lack the ability to harm or benefit you.

INTERPRETATION OF *Nay, but they play in doubt*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Those people who are unsure of the reality of all that has been said to them and have been informed of all of these reports—in other words, the Qurayshī polytheists—are *in doubt* regarding this. They are distracted by their doubts regarding all of that which they have been informed.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:10] *But wait for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke* [44:11] *That will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment.* [44:12] (*Then they will say*), *Our Lord, relieve us of the torment. Lo! we are believers.*

God (may His remembrance be exalted) means by His statement *fa'rtaqib*: "O Muḥammad, wait for these polytheists, from among your people, *who but play in doubt* (Q.44:9)." The verb *irtaqaba* is [Form VIII] of the verb *raqabtahu*, meaning: "you waited for it" or "you watched over it".

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*fa'rtaqib*, meaning *fa'ntazir* ('wait')."

INTERPRETATION OF *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke.*

The interpreters disagreed over the day for which God commanded His Prophet (ṣ) to wait. [God] informed him that the sky will produce *visible smoke*, but when will this happen? Which day is it? And what is the nature of the smoke mentioned in this passage?

Q. 44:10

OPINION: Some of them said: This occurred when the Messenger of God (ṣ) requested His Lord to inflict years of drought (*sinīn*) upon the Quraysh, like the drought at the time of [the Prophet] Joseph, so they would be seized by famine. They said: What is meant by "the smoke" is the darkness their eyes would suffer from the intensity of their hunger, which would be like the appearance of smoke.

An account of those who said that:

ʿĪsā b. ʿUthmān b. ʿĪsā al-Ramlī—Yaḥyā b. ʿĪsā—al-Aʿmash—Muslim—Masrūq said,

> We entered the mosque, when we heard a storyteller telling his audience, "There will come *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke*. Do you know what this smoke is? This smoke will come on Resurrection Day and overwhelm the sight and hearing of the hypocrites, but afflict the believers with just a slight head cold (*zukām*)." Masrūq said: We proceeded to visit Ibn Masʿūd and mentioned what we had heard this storyteller say. Ibn Masʿūd, who was lying down, suddenly became distraught and bolted upright. He said, "God (Mighty and Majestic is He) said to His Prophet (ṣ), *Say: No reward I ask of you for this (message), nor am I a pretender* (Q.38:86). Part of true knowledge is a man's act of saying 'God knows best' when he does not know something. I shall inform you about this [verse]. While the Quraysh were converting very slowly to

> Islam and resisting the teachings of the Messenger of God (ṣ), [Muḥammad] requested [God] to afflict them with years of drought, like the drought which [the Prophet] Joseph experienced, so they would suffer such hardship and hunger that they would be reduced to eating bones and carrion. When [the Quraysh] raised their eyes to the sky, all they could see was smoke, and God (Blessed and Exalted is He) said *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke that will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment.* [The Quraysh] replied, *Our Lord, relieve us of the torment. Lo! we are believers.* God replied: *Lo! We withdraw the torment a little. Lo! you return (to disbelief). On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure, (then) in truth We shall punish* (Q.44:15–16)." [Ibn Masʿūd] said, "They 'returned' at the battle of Badr, at which time God 'avenged' some of them."[1]

Q. 44:10

A nearly identical version of this report was narrated to me from ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Zuhrī—Mālik b. Suʿayr—al-Aʿmash—Muslim—Masrūq, with the difference that he said, "[God] avenged them at the battle of Badr, which is *the greater seizure*."

Ibn Ḥumayd and ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Abū'l-Ḍuḥā Muslim b. Ṣubayḥ—Masrūq said,

> We were sitting with Ibn Masʿūd, who was lying down, when a man came to him saying, "O Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [Ibn Masʿūd]! There is a storyteller telling tales at the gates of Kinda, who claims that the 'verse of smoke' will come [at the end of time], seize the souls of the disbelievers, and leave the believers with little more than a head cold." Ibn Masʿūd sat upright in an angry state and said, "O people, fear God! Whoever knows something let him speak what he knows. Whoever does not know something let him say, 'God knows best.'"[2] "There is no [penalty] for any of you to say 'I do not know' when you do not know something.

1 According to Suyūṭī, Ibn Masʿūd's *ḥadīth* is found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī; the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; the *Sunan* of Saʿīd b. Manṣūr; the Qurʾānic commentary of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd; and the *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* books of Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:743. He does not mention its presence in Ṭabarī's commentary.

2 ʿAmr's narration: "The more knowledgeable one among you says 'God knows best' when he does not know something."

God (Mighty and Majestic is He) says to His Prophet (ṣ), *Say: No reward I ask of you for this (message), nor am I a pretender* (Q.38:86). When the Prophet (ṣ) saw that his people were turning away from him, he said, 'O Lord, [afflict them with] seven [years of hunger] like the seven [years of famine at the time] of Joseph.' A year followed in which everything was destroyed, to the point that [the Meccans] were eating skins, carrion and carcasses. Whenever one of them would look up at the sky, he would see smoke, due to his intense hunger. Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb came to the Prophet and said, 'O Muḥammad, you came commanding us to be obedient and to maintain good family relations, yet verily your people are perishing! Supplicate your Lord on their behalf!' God (Mighty and Majestic is He) said, *But wait for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke* until
Q. 44:10 His statement *Lo! you return (to disbelief)*; Q.44:10–15). *On the day* which was hidden from them *when We shall seize them with the greater seizure, (then) in truth We shall punish* (Q.44:16)." [Ibn Masʿūd said], "The 'seizure' refers to the battle of Badr. The Qur'ānic verses about the Byzantines (Q.30:1–4), 'the smoke', 'the seizure' (Q.44:16), and 'the inevitable' (*lizām*; Q.25:77) all have taken place already."[1]

Abū'l-Sā'ib—Abū Muʿāwiya—al-Aʿmash—Muslim—Masrūq—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, "Five things have all taken place in the past: the smoke, 'the inevitable', the 'seizure', the [splitting of the] moon and [the victory] of the Byzantines."

Abū Kurayb—Abū Bakr b. ʿAyyāsh—ʿĀṣim said, "I witnessed a funeral at which Zayd b. ʿAlī was in attendance and he began to speak, saying, 'Truly the smoke will come prior to Resurrection Day, and it will affect the nose of the believer like a head cold, and will affect the ears of the disbeliever.'" [ʿĀṣim] said, "May God have mercy on you! Our companion Ibn Masʿūd has said otherwise. He said that the smoke has already taken place, reciting the verses, *But wait for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke that will envelop the people. This will be a painful*

1 In other words, these are allusions to worldly, as opposed to eschatological or apocalyptic, events. As this passage of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* makes clear, considerable debate took place among exegetes over whether these Qur'ānic words alluded to worldly or apocalyptic events.

torment. [Ibn Masʿūd] said that the [Meccan] people were afflicted by toil (*jahd*) to the point that men began seeing smoke between themselves and the sky. That is the meaning of His statement *But wait*. Ibn Masʿūd continued reciting until he reached His statement *believers* (Q.44:15). He said, *Lo! We withdraw the torment a little. Lo! you return (to disbelief)*." ʿĀṣim said to Zayd, "They returned [to disbelief] and so God returned against them at the battle of Badr. That is the meaning of His statement *if you repeat (the crime), We shall repeat (the punishment*; Q.17:8), since that was the battle of Badr." Someone said, "By God! ʿĀṣim said [that]!" Then a man began to respond to him, and so Zayd (may God have mercy on him) said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'Narrators will come to you in the future—adhere to whatever is in agreement with the Qur'ān, and shun anything else.'"[1]

Ibn al-Muthannā—Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—Ibn Masʿūd said, "*The greater seizure* is the battle of Badr and *the smoke* has happened already." Q. 44:10

Ibn Bashshār—Ibn Abī ʿAdī—ʿAwf said, "I heard Abū'l-ʿĀliya say, 'Truly *the smoke* has happened already.'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Salama—ʿAmr—Mughīra [b. Miqsam]—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, "*The smoke* has happened already, on account of the drought that afflicted them."

Yaʿqūbb. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Ayyūb—Muḥammad [b. Sīrīn] said, "I was informed that Ibn Masʿūd would say, '*The smoke* has happened already; it was the drought, like the drought [at the time] of Joseph.'"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. 'Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke* through His statement *Lo! we are believers*, "This passage refers to the drought and absence of rain that afflicted the disbelieving Quraysh."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke*, "Ibn Masʿūd would say, '*The smoke* has happened, and it was a drought like the drought [at the time] of Joseph. *That (smoke) will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment*.'"

1 Zayd b. ʿAlī's *ḥadīth* appears neither in *al-Durr al-manthūr* nor the canonical *Ḥadīth* collections. Zayd is the grandson of the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn, so there is a significant gap in the transmission of this *ḥadīth*.

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke*, "The episode of *the smoke* has happened."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure* (Q.44:16), "[It refers to] the battle of Badr."[1]

OPINION: Others said: *The smoke* is one of God's signs that will be sent to His servants prior to the arrival of the Last Hour. It permeates the ears of the disbelievers and grazes the faithful like a head cold. [Nothing] will come after it when it arrives.

An account of those who said that:

Wāṣil b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—[Muḥammad] ibn Fuḍayl—al-Walīd b. Jumayʿ—ʿAbd al-Malik b. al-Mughīra—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Baylamānī—Ibn ʿUmar said, "*The smoke* will come forth and affect the believer like a cold and it will fill the ears of the disbeliever and hypocrite to the point that their heads will roast."

Q. 44:10

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Ibn Jurayj—ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Mulayka said, "I went out to Ibn ʿAbbās one morning and he said, 'I did not sleep a wink last night.' I said, 'Why?' He replied, 'They say that a comet appeared, and I was afraid that *the smoke* had occured, so I did not sleep all night.'"

Muḥammad b. Bazīʿ—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—ʿAwf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "Truly *the smoke* is one of the remaining signs [of God]. When *the smoke* comes, the disbeliever will inhale it to the point that it will come out of both his ears, while it will affect the believer like a head cold."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—ʿUthmān, meaning Ibn al-Haytham—ʿAwf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī].

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—Abū Saʿīd [al-Khudrī] said, "The *smoke* will engulf humanity. As for the believers, it will affect them like a cold; but for the disbelievers, it will afflict them to the point that it comes out of both their ears." He said, "Some scholars would say, 'On that day, the earth will be like a house that is totally engulfed in fire—there will be no respite.'"

ʿIṣām b. Rawwād b. al-Jarrāḥ—my father—Sufyān b. Saʿīd al-Thawrī—Manṣūr b. al-Muʿtamir—Ribʿī b. Ḥirāsh—Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "The first sign among the

1 This report appears to be out of place in the *Tafsīr*, since it does not mention *the smoke*.

signs [of the apocalypse] is the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*), [and thereafter] the return of Jesus, the Son of Mary, and a fire from the bottom of Aden Abyan.[1] It will drive all people to the gathering place, resting upon them wherever they rest, and *the smoke*." Ḥudhayfa said, "O Messenger of God, what is *the smoke*?" The Messenger of God (ṣ) recited the verse *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke that will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment*, before saying, "All that is between the East and the West will be filled [by this smoke] for forty days and nights. The believer experiences it as if it was a head cold, but the disbeliever experiences it as if he were intoxicated by it, expelling [smoke] from his nostrils, ears and anus."[2]

Muḥammad b. ʿAwf—Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh—my father—Ḍamḍam b. Zurʿa—Shurayḥ b. ʿUbayd—Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Truly your Lord warns you of three [upcoming] things: *the smoke* that affects the believer like a head cold and engulfs the disbeliever to the point that it comes out of his ears; second, the Beast; and third, the Antichrist."[3]

Q. 44:10

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion which is most likely to be correct, if the *ḥadīth* narrated by Ḥudhayfa that we mentioned is not sound, is the one that was reported on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd: the smoke that God ordered His Prophet (ṣ) to wait for is the affliction that the Prophet called down upon [the Quraysh]. Yet if Ḥudhayfa's *ḥadīth* is sound, then that is the preferred interpretation, because the Messenger of God (ṣ) is the most knowledgeable person of what God sent down to him. Nobody else's opinion is worth anything if the Messenger's opinion is sound [in its transmission]. However, I do not uphold [this latter *ḥadīth*'s] authenticity because Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-ʿAsqalānī informed me that he had the following conversation with its transmitter, Rawwād [b. al-Jarrāḥ]:

Muḥammad b. Khalaf: "Did you hear this *ḥadīth* from Sufyān [al-Thawrī]?"

Rawwād: "No".

Muḥammad b. Khalaf: "Did you read this *ḥadīth* to Sufyān?"

Rawwād: "No".

Muḥammad b. Khalaf: "Was this *ḥadīth* recited to Sufyān, who then acknowledged its veracity in your presence?"

1 Aden is a port city at the southern tip of Yemen; Abyan is the province immediately to its east.
2 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found only in Ṭabarī's commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:745.
3 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found only in the Qur'ānic commentary of Ṭabarī and one of Ṭabarānī's *Ḥadīth* collections; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:745.

Rawwād: "No".

Muḥammad b. Khalaf: "How did you get this *ḥadīth*?"

Rawwād: "It came to me from a group of people who read it to me in my presence.[1] They said to me, 'Hear it from us' and then they read it to me. Then they left. Later these people related this *ḥadīth* on my authority." (Or however he put it.)[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: In light of what I mentioned to you, regarding that, I no longer upheld this *ḥadīth* to be sound. I only said that Ibn Masʿūd's opinion is a superior explanation for this verse because God (Majestic is His praise) threatened the Qurayshī polytheists with *the smoke*. God's statement to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), *But wait for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke*, occurs in the context of God's address to the Qurayshī disbelievers and His act of upbraiding them for their polytheism, as can be seen by the [nearby] verses: *There is no God save Him. He brings life and gives death; your Lord and Lord of your forefathers. Nay, but they play in doubt* (Q.44:8–9). God followed these two verses with His statement to His Prophet (ṣ), *But wait for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke*, which is a command for [Muḥammad] to be patient until God's punishment afflicts the polytheists which serves as a warning to them. If this [smoke] is intended as a threat to the Qurayshī polytheists, it is more likely for it to afflict them, rather than for it to be postponed for another group of people.

Q. 44:11

However, it is not an incorrect [interpretation] for God to apply this smoke to one group of disbelievers whom He threatened with it and then apply smoke [as a punishment] to another group, independently, at a later time. This would be consistent with the reports that have come down to us from the Messenger of God (ṣ), because the reports from the Messenger of God (ṣ) make clear that this will happen. Both Ibn Masʿūd's report and the other Prophetic report are sound, even if the [correct] interpretation of the verse in this place is what we have said.

If all that we have said, concerning the better of the two interpretations of this verse, is correct, then it is clear that its meaning is: O Muḥammad, wait for the polytheists among your people to experience a day in which the sky will afflict them because of their disbelief. This

1 Arabic: *ʿaraḍāhu ʿalayya*. *ʿArḍ* is a technical term of *ḥadīth* transmission, by which one reads a text in the teacher's presence and then transmits it on his authority; see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *An Introduction to the Science of Ḥadīth*, translated by Eerik Dickinson (Reading: Garnet, 2005), 100–101.

2 Arabic: *aw kamā qāla*. This expression indicates that the preceding dialogue may have been conducted in slightly different words, but that the meaning is accurate; see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Introduction*, 151.

affliction will be like *visible smoke* for those who consider it to be smoke.

It *will envelop the people*. He says: It will envelop their eyes, on account of the toil afflicting them. *This is a painful torment*. The polytheists suffering this calamity and toil will say, *This is a painful torment*. This is something which inflicts pain. The word "they say" is elided from this sentence because listeners understand that it is the polytheists who are saying *This is a painful torment*, rendering it unnecessary to say that [explicitly].

INTERPRETATION OF *Our Lord, relieve us of the torment*

This means: The disbelievers, who are afflicted by this toil, are humbling themselves to their Lord, begging Him for relief from the toil He has put upon them. They are saying, "If You relieve us this torment, we will believe in You and worship You, without associating anything with You," as God (Majestic is His praise) informed us about them: *Our Lord, relieve us of the torment. Lo! we are believers.*

Q. 44:11–13

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:13] *How can there be remembrance for them, when a Messenger making plain (the Truth) had already come to them,* [44:14] *And they had turned away from him, saying, One taught (by others), a madman?* [44:15] *Lo! We withdraw the torment a little. Lo! you return (to disbelief).*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: How could there be any way for these polytheists to remember [God] after this affliction has been sent upon them, as they have turned their backs on Our Messenger when he came to them? They do not remember the words from Our Book that have been recited to them, nor are they moved by the proofs We have shown them in Our exhortations. Rather, they say, "He is *a madman* who has been taught this speech."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning *How can there be remembrance for them*. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *annā there be remembrance for them*, "How can there be for them?"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashy-

ab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "*How can there be remembrance for them* after this affliction has befallen them?"

INTERPRETATION OF *And they had turned away from him, saying, One taught (by others), a madman?*

The following interpreters also said something similar to what we have just said concerning that above. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *And they had turned away from him, saying, One taught (by others), a madman?*, "They turned away from Muḥammad (upon him peace), saying, *One taught (by others), a madman?*"

Q. 44:15

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! We withdraw the torment a little. Lo! you return (to disbelief)*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to these polytheists, whom He informed us were seeking relief from the smoke that came down upon them and the torment they deserved, *We withdraw the torment a little.* He informed us that they pledged to believe in Him if He would withdraw His torment from them. [So, He said], *We withdraw the torment a little,* meaning the harm that came down upon them, by means of making the land fertile for them. *Lo! you return.* He says: O you polytheists! Whenever I withdraw the torment from you, you do not fulfil your promises to believe in your Lord. Instead, you resort to your erroneous ways and misguidance that you used to do, prior to [the torment] being withdrawn from you.

Qatāda would say, "Its meaning is '*Lo! you return* to God's torment,'" as we were informed by [Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda.

As for those who said "What is meant by the *smoke* in His statement, *the day when the sky will produce visible smoke,* is the smoke itself," in this place they said: What is meant by *the torment* is *We withdraw the torment a little* is the *smoke.*

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. AbīʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*We withdraw the torment a little,* meaning the *smoke* [in Q.44:10]."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning *His*

statement *We withdraw the torment a little,* "God did this by withdrawing the *smoke* from where it had been."

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! you return*

He said: [The torment] was removed from them and then they returned [to their previous state].

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*Lo! you return* to God's torment."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:16] On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure, (then) in truth We shall punish. [44:17] And verily We tried before them Pharaoh's folk, when there came to them a noble Messenger, [44:18] Saying, Give up to me the servants of God. Lo! I am a faithful Messenger to you.

Q. 44:16

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "O polytheists, if I withdraw My torment upon you and relieve you of the harm you justly deserve and then you return to your prior state of disbelief, violating your pact that you made with Your Lord, I will punish (or avenge) you in this world, on the day I seize you with My *greater seizure* and I will destroy you." So God withdrew [his torment, the polytheists] returned [to disbelief], and God (Majestic is His praise) seized them in the temporal world with His *greater seizure* and destroyed them by having them killed by the sword.

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *the greater seizure.*

OPINION: Some of them said: It is God's seizure of the Qurayshī polytheists at the battle of Badr.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn al-Muthannā—Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—Ibn Masʿūd said, "*The greater seizure* [happened] at the battle of Badr."

ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Zuhrī—Mālik b. Suʿayr—al-Aʿmash—Muslim—Masrūq said: ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd said], "The battle of Badr is *the greater seizure.*"

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Ayyūb—Muḥammad [b. Sīrīn] said, "I was informed that Ibn Masʿūd would say, concerning *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure,* 'The battle of Badr'."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Layth—Mujāhid said, concerning *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure,* "The battle of Badr".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abi Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure*, "The battle of Badr".

Ibn Bashshār—Ibn Abī ʿAdī—ʿAwf said, "I heard Abū'l-ʿĀliya say, concerning the verse *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure*, 'The battle of Badr'."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure*, meaning the battle of Badr."

Abū Kurayb—ʿAththām b. ʿAlī—al-Aʿmash said, "Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] asked [ʿIkrima],[1] 'What is *the greater seizure*?' He said, 'Resurrection Day'. I said Ibn Masʿūd would say that it is the battle of Badr. [Ibrāhīm] said, 'It reached me that [ʿIkrima] was asked this question later and he replied, "It is the battle of Badr."'"

Q. 44:16

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb and Abū'l-Sāʾib—Ibn Idrīs—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm.

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—Abū'l-Khalīl—Mujāhid—Ubayy b. Kaʿb said, "[This verse refers to] the battle of Badr."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure*, "The battle of Badr".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure*, "This is the battle of Badr."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, it is God's seizure of His enemies on Resurrection Day.

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Khālid al-Ḥadhdhāʾ—ʿIkrima said: Ibn ʿAbbās said: Ibn Masʿūd said, "The *greater seizure* [happened] at the battle of Badr." However, I say: It [will happen] at Resurrection Day.

Abū Kurayb and Abū'l-Sāʾib—Ibn Idrīs—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, "ʿIkrima passed by me and I asked him about *the greater*

1 See the report under the OPINION that identifies ʿIkrima as the interlocutor.

seizure. ʿIkrima said, 'It [will happen] at Resurrection Day.' I said, 'Ibn Masʿūd said it was at the battle of Badr.' I was infomed by someone, who later asked [ʿIkrima about this], that he said, 'It [happened] at the battle of Badr.'"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *On the day when We shall seize them with the greater seizure*, "Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, 'It is Resurrection Day.'"

ṬABARĪ SAID: I have already clarified which interpretation is correct and explained the reason that led me to choose the interpretation I have chosen.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *And verily We tried before them Pharaoh's folk, when there came to them a noble Messenger*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O Muḥammad, We tried and tested the Coptic people of Pharaoh, long before we tried and tested your polytheist kinsmen, *when there came to them a noble Messenger*. He says: "*A Messenger* from among their own whom We sent *came to them*, and this is Moses, son of ʿImrān (ṣ)," as we have been informed by:

Q. 44:18

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And verily We tried before them Pharaoh's folk, when there came to them a noble Messenger*, "In other words, Moses."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *a noble Messenger*, "Moses (upon him peace)."

God (Majestic is His praise) describes him as *noble* (*karīm*) because He honoured him and elevated his place [among the Prophets]. Moses could be described in this way because he was noble and fair among his people.

INTERPRETATION OF *Saying, Give up to me the servants of God*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *A noble Messenger* from God came to the people of Pharaoh, "So that they would give up to me [my people]." The words *addū ilayya* mean "give up to me."[2] [Moses said]: "Send them with me and let them follow me". This verse is like His statement *let the Children of Israel go with us* (Q.26:17).

The particle *an* is written with a *fatḥa* [on the *alif*], and the *servants of God* is in the accusative case, because it is the object of His statement *Give*

1 See above, Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.44:10–12.

2 This gloss and the following two sentences are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:40.

up.[1] A group of people interpreted this verse to mean "Give in to me, O servants of God," in which case *servants of God* would be in the accusative case, due to its being in the form of address (*nidāʾ*).

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning *Give up to me*. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And verily We tried before them Pharaoh's folk, when there came to them a noble Messenger, saying, Give up to me the servants of God. Lo! I am a faithful Messenger to you*, "He says: Follow me in accordance with the truth to which I summon you."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Give up to me the servants of God*, "Send the Children of Israel with me." Q. 44:18

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Give up to me the servants of God*, "The Children of Israel".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*Give up to me the servants of God*, meaning the Children of Israel. [Moses] said to Pharaoh, 'On what grounds do you hold these people in captivity? They are free people whom you have taken as slaves. Let them go!'"

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Give up to me the servants of God*, "He says: 'Send *the servants of God*, meaning the Children of Israel, with me.'" Then he recited *So let the children of Israel go with us, and torment them not* (Q.20:47) and said, "Likewise, His statement *Give up to me the servants of God* means 'Return them to us'."

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! I am a faithful Messenger to you*

[Moses] says: O people, *lo! I am a Messenger* from God, Who sent me *to you*. May His severe penalty for your disbelief in Him not afflict you! [I am] *faithful*. He says: *Faithful* to His revelation and message with which He sent me to you.[2]

1 Most of the content of this paragraph is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:40.

2 The Dār Hajar editors emend the text to read *awfadanihā* ("He sent it to me") instead of *awʿadanihā* ("He threatened me with it"); 21:30.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:19] *(And saying), Be not proud against God. Lo! I bring you a clear warrant.* [44:20] *And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest you stone me.* [44:21] *And if you put no faith in me, then let me go.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *A noble Messenger came to them*, saying, "*Give up to me the servants of God and be not proud against God.*" What is meant by *Be not proud against God* is: Do not be iniquitous or act wrongfully towards your Lord, in such a way that you disbelieve in Him, disobey Him and go against His command. *Lo! I bring you a clear warrant*. He says: *Lo! I bring you* a proof of the reality of that to which I am summoning you. It is a proof of its veracity, which is *clear* to whoever reflects and meditates upon it, that it is a proof in support of the veracity of what I am saying to you.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that: Q. 44:19

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Be not proud against God*, "In other words, do not act wrongfully towards God, and *Lo! I bring you a clear warrant*. In other words, [I bring you] *a clear* plea."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda.

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Be not proud against God*, "Do not fabricate lies about God."

INTERPRETATION OF *And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest you stone me*

He says: *And lo!* I seek protection from *my Lord and your Lord*, and refuge in Him from you, *lest you stone me* (*an tarjumūnī*).

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of the *rajm* from which Moses, the Prophet of God (upon him peace), sought refuge with His Lord.[1]

OPINION: Some of them said: It is verbal vilification.

An account of those who said that:

1 A similar debate over the meaning of *rajm* took place above, in Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.36:18.

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest you tarjumūni*, "In other words, verbal vilification (*rajm al-qawl*)."

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿUthmān b. ʿUmar b. Fāris—Shuʿba—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning His statement *And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest you tarjumūni*, "Verbal vilification".

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Yaḥyā b. Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ismāʿīl—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning *And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest you tarjumūni*, "Lest you say, 'He is a sorcerer.'"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, it is *rajm* with stones.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest you tarjumūni*, "In other words, lest you *tarjumūni* with stones." Q. 44:21

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *lest you tarjumūni*, "*Lest you tarjumūnī* with stones."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by His statement *lest you tarjumūni* is "lest you kill me".[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The interpretation regarding this which is most likely to be correct is the one which is supported by the apparent meaning of the passage. In this case, it would be that Moses (upon him peace) sought refuge with God from Pharaoh and his people, lest they stone him. The word *rajm* can be a speech act or a physical act.[2] Therefore, the correct interpretation of this verse is to say: Moses sought refuge with His Lord from every type of harmful *rajm*—both verbal vilification and physical stoning with stones.

INTERPRETATION OF *And if you put no faith in me, then let me go*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, informing us of Moses' statement (upon him peace) to Pharaoh and his people: "O people, if you do not believe that what I have brought you comes from My Lord, *then let me go.*"

1 This is the opinion of al-Farrāʾ; *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:40.

2 Literally, "a statement of the tongue or an act of the hand"; Dār Hajar, 21:32.

He says: "Stay clear of my path and keep it free from verbal or physical attack," as we have been informed by:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And if you put no faith in me, then let me go*, "In other words, stay clear of my path."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:22] *And he cried out to His Lord, These are guilty folk!* [44:23] *Then (his Lord replied to him), Take away My servants by night. Lo! you will be followed* [44:24] *And leave the sea behind at rest, for lo! they are a drowned host.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Moses *cried out to his Lord* when they rejected him, did not believe him, refused to give up to him the servants of God and intended to kill him. [They did all this] because *they*, meaning Pharoah and his people, were a *guilty folk*, meaning they associated partners with God and rejected Him. Q. 44:24

INTERPRETATION OF *Then (His Lord replied to him), Take away My servants by night. Lo! you will be followed*

There is an ellipsis in this sentence, namely, "His Lord replied to him." It is unnecessary to mention these words because it is sufficiently indicated from the context that only God could have said, *Take away My servants by night* to Moses. These servants are the Children of Israel. The meaning of this passage is: "*Take away* at night *my servants*, who believe you, have faith in you, and follow you—to the exclusion of those who reject you and refuse to accept the sincere advice you have brought them." The people who matched this description at that time were the Children of Israel. He said, *Take away My servants by night* because the meaning of that is: Journey with them at night prior to morning.

As for *Lo! you will be followed*, He says: Truly Pharaoh and his Coptic people will follow your footsteps, if you leave their country and lands.

INTERPRETATION OF *And leave the sea behind at rest*

He says: "When you and your companions have crossed the sea, leave it at rest,[1] so that it is in the same condition that it was in when you entered it." It was alleged that God (Exalted is His remembrance) said these

1 Abū ʿUbayda and al-Farrāʾ also gloss *rahwan* as *sākinan*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:208; and *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:41.

words to Moses after he had crossed the [Red Sea] with the Children of Israel. If that is how it is, then there is an ellipsis in this passage and the full meaning of the verse is: Moses took My servants by night, crossed the sea with them, and then We [God] said to him, after the crossing, when [Moses] wished for the sea to be returned to its original condition, prior to being parted, "*Leave* it *behind at rest*."

An account of those who said what we have mentioned, that God (Mighty and Majestic is He) said this statement to Moses after he had crossed the sea with his people:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda recited His statement *And he cried out to His Lord, These are guilty folk* until he reached *They are a drowned host* and said, "When the last of the Children of Israel came out [of the sea], the Prophet of God, Moses (upon him peace), wanted to strike the sea with his staff so that it would return to its original state, out of fear that Pharaoh's people would overtake them. It was said to him, *Leave the sea behind at rest, for lo! they are a drowned host*."

Q. 44:24

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "When [Moses] had crossed the sea, he was inclined to strike it with his staff to remove the parting and feared that Pharaoh and his host would follow him. It was said to him, '*Leave the sea behind at rest* as it is, *for lo! they are a drowned host*.'"

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *rahw* ("at rest").

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: Leave it in the form and state that it was in.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—Alī [b. Abī Talḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind*, "As a path (*samtan*)".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind rahwan, for lo! they are a drowned host*, "*Rahw* means that it is left as it was. They will not be saved by it [from drowning]."

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Ḥumayd—Isḥāq b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith[1]—his father—Ibn ʿAbbās asked Kaʿb [al-Aḥbār] about God's statement, *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, and he said: As a path.

1 Following the name proposed by the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, 21:35.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, its meaning is: Leave it undisturbed.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, "Undisturbed".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, "It has been alleged that *rahw* means 'undisturbed'."

Ibn al-Muthannā—Ḥaramī b. ʿUmāra—Shuʿba—ʿUmāra—al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim said, concerning God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, "Smooth".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, "Undisturbed and smooth".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, "It is undisturbed."

Q. 44:24

OPINION: Others said: Rather, its meaning is: Leave it as a dry path.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Muʿādh—my father—Shuʿba—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, "As a path".

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Muʿādh—my father—Shuʿba—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *Leave the sea behind rahwan*, "Dry, in the form it had after you struck it [with your staff]. He says: Do not command him to return it [to its earlier state]; leave it until the last of them enters it."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *rahwan*, "As a dry path".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*Leave the sea rahwan* like it is, as a dry path."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is that its meaning is: "Leave [the sea] in the shape it is in, in the state it was when you crossed it." That is because in the speech of the Arabs, *rahw* means "stationary, at rest (*sukūn*)", as the poet said:[1]

1 These verses are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:41.

ka'annamā ahlu ḥujrin yanzurūna matā
yarawnanī khārijan tayrun yanādidu

tayrun ra'at bāziyan naḍḥu'l-dimā' bihi
wa-ummuhu kharajat rahwan ilā ʿidī[1]

As if the people of the chamber were looking when
a variegated flock of birds looked at me, leaving;

These birds saw a falcon with blood-stained feathers;
While its mother went out, [it was] motionless until [her] return.

The word *rahw* in this verse means "motionless". If that is the correct meaning, then there is no doubt that the sea was to be left undisturbed, smooth and as a dry path, because that is how it was when the Children of Israel crossed it. Therefore, there is no doubt that if the sea were left behind at rest (*rahwan*), motionless and undisturbed, like it was when Moses crossed it, [the sea] would be the way I have described it.

Q. 44:24-6

INTERPRETATION OF *for lo! they are a drowned host*

He says: Truly Pharaoh and his people are *a host* whom God drowned in the sea.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:25] *How many were the gardens and the springs that they left behind*
[44:26] *And the fields and the dignified station* [44:27] *And pleasant things wherein they took delight!* [44:28] *Even so (it was), and We made it an inheritance for other folk*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: How many gardens and trees did Pharaoh and his Coptic people leave behind after their destruction and God's act of drowning them? These are the *gardens and springs*, meaning springs gushing in their gardens, and *fields* full of crops. *The dignified station* (*maqām karīm*) is the dignified, noble place they established.

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of God's description of the station as *dignified*.

OPINION: Some of them said: He described [the station] like that on account of its nobility, because it is the site of kings and commanders.

1 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition remark that these verses suffer from the defect called *iqwā'*, which occurs when the final vowel of each line is not consistent; 21:38.

They said: What is intended by it is the platforms (or pulpits; *manābir*).

An account of those who said that:

Jaʿfar, the son of the daughter of Isḥāq al-Azraq[1]—Saʿīd b. Muḥammad al-Thaqafī—Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. Muhājir—his father—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *and the dignified station*, "The platforms".

Zakariyyā b. Yaḥyā b. Abī Zāʾida—ʿAbd Allāh b. Dāwūd al-Wāsiṭī—Sharīk—Sālim al-Afṭas—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning His statement *and the dignified station*, "The platforms".

OPINION: Others said: That *station* is described as *dignified* on account of its beauty and splendour.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *and the dignified station*, "In other words, beautiful [station]."

INTERPRETATION OF *And pleasant things wherein they took delight!*

Q. 44:27

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: They were removed from *the pleasant things wherein they took delight*, amused, taking delight (*nāʿimīn*).

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the reading of *they took delight*.[2] Most of the Qurʾān reciters of the garrison cities, except for Abū Jaʿfar al-Madanī, read *fākihīn*, in accordance with the meaning I just described. Abū Rajāʾ al-ʿUṭāridī, al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] and Abū Jaʿfar al-Madanī read *fakihīn*, with the meaning of "joyfully and merrily".

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct reading is the one which all of the reciters of the garrison cities read: *fākihīn* with an *alif* and meaning "taking delight".

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And pleasant things wherein they fākihīn*, "Taking delight (*nāʿimīn*). By God! God took [Pharaoh] out of his gardens, springs and fields in order to hurl him into the sea!"

1 This appears to be a grandson of Isḥāq b. Yūsuf al-Azraq (d. 195/810–11), the respected *Hadith* scholar and Qurʾān reciter of Wasit. I have not been able to locate the name of Isḥāq's daughter or the name of Jaʿfar's father, by which he would have more commonly been known. For Isḥāq al-Azraq, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārikh madīnat al-salām*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 7:324–9; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 9:171–2; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:244–5.

2 Compare this with Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.36:55; see volume 1.

INTERPRETATION OF *Even so (it was), and We made it an inheritance for other folk*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, it is as I have described it to you. We have handled these people, whose affair I have mentioned—those who rejected Moses (s), Our Messenger. *We made it an inheritance for other folk*. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: After their destruction, We made another people inherit their gardens, springs, fields and stations, wherein they had delighted.

It has been alleged that what is meant by the *other folk* is the Children of Israel. An account of those who have said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*Even so (it was), and We made it an inheritance for other folk*, meaning the Children of Israel."

Q. 44:28

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:29] And the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved. [44:30] And We delivered the Children of Israel from the shameful torment; [44:31] (We delivered them) from Pharaoh. Lo! he was a tyrant of the excessive ones.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "The heaven and the earth did not weep for these folks—Pharaoh and his people—whom God drowned in the sea."

It has been alleged that the weeping of the heaven is the redness of its outer horizons.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Aḥmasī—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥammād—al-Ḥakam b. Ẓuhayr—Suddī said, "When al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (r)[1] was killed, the heaven wept, and its weeping was its redness."

ʿAlī b. Sahl—Ḥajjāj—Ibn Jurayj—ʿAṭāʾ said, concerning His statement *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them*, "Its weeping is the redness of its outer horizons."

1 Al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī is a grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad who, with a small band of his followers, raised a revolt against the Umayyad caliphate in which he and his followers were killed on the tenth of Muḥarram in 680 CE at Karbala, Iraq. Ḥusayn is venerated as the third Imām by adherents to Zaydi, Ismāʿīlī and Twelver Shīʿism. Ṭabarī provides a lengthy and graphic description of Ḥusayn's revolt against the caliph Yazīd in his history; see *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. XIX: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya*, translated by I. K. A. Howard (Albany: SUNY, 1990), 16–183.

It has also been suggested that *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them* was said because whenever a believer dies, the heaven and earth weep for him [or her] for forty mornings. They did not weep for Pharaoh and his people because they did not have any virtuous deeds that ascended to God and would have caused the heaven to weep for them. They did not have a single house of worship on earth, [the presence of which] would have led the earth to weep for them.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ṭalq b. Ghannām—Zāʾida—Manṣūr—al-Minhāl—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "A man came to Ibn ʿAbbās and said, 'O Abū ʿAbbās, have you noticed God's statement (Blessed and Exalted is He), *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved*? Do the heaven and earth really weep for anyone?' [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, 'Yes. Every single person has a portal (*bāb*) in the heaven, from which his provision comes down to him and through which his deeds ascend. Whenever a believer dies, his or her celestial portal is locked shut, and the heaven weeps on behalf of its closure. If a believer leaves behind a prayer space where he used to pray and remember God, the earth weeps for him. The people of Pharaoh neither left behind righteous traces on the earth, nor did any goodness ascend from them to the heaven. Therefore, neither the heaven nor the earth wept on their behalf.'"[1]

Q. 44:29

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī] and Yaḥyā [al-Qaṭṭān]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "It has been suggested that the earth weeps for every believer [who dies] for forty mornings."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from:

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭāt—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās.

Yaḥyā b. Ṭalḥa—Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "I have been informed that when a believer dies, the earth weeps for him for forty mornings."

Ibn Bashshār—Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Ḥaḍramī—Bukayr b. Abī Samīṭ—Qatāda—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "The earthly plain, from which one's good deeds ascend to the heaven, weeps for him upon his [or her] death, meaning [the death of] the believer."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—Manṣūr—al-Minhāl—Saʿīd b.

1 This remarkable theological opinion ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās is found elsewhere only in the Qurʾānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd and Ibn al-Mundhir, and Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-imān*; Suyūṭī, *Durr al-manthūr*, 5:747.

Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them*, "Every single person has a portal in the heaven from which his provision comes down to him and through which his deeds ascend. When he is deceased, all the places where he prostrated [in prayer] weep for him. The people of Pharaoh did not do a single virtuous deed on earth that was accepted by and ascended to God (Mighty and Majestic is He)." Mujāhid said, "The earth weeps on behalf of a believer for forty mornings."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "It has been suggested that when a believer dies, the earth weeps for him for forty mornings."

Yaḥyā b. Ṭalḥa—ʿĪsā b. Yūnus—Ṣafwān b. ʿAmr—Shurayḥ b. ʿUbayd al-Ḥaḍramī said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Islam began like a stranger and will return to being like a stranger. There is no loneliness for the believer; and no believer dies as a lonely stranger without anyone weeping for him, for the heaven and earth weep for him." Then the Messenger of God (ṣ) recited, *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them* and said, "The heaven and earth do not weep for a disbeliever (*kāfir*)."[1]

Q. 44:29

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them* until the end of the verse, "There is no believer on the face of the earth for whom the places where he prostrated (*masājid*) will not weep for him when he leaves them [at death]. Also, the place in the heaven where his [good] words ascended will weep for him.[2] So, *the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved* because they only weep for the Friends of God."

(Bishr [b. Muʾādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them.*)[3]

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *mursal ḥadīth* is found only in Ṭabarī's commentary and a book by Ibn Abī Dunyā; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:748. The sentence "Islam began like a stranger and will return to being like a stranger" is found in *ḥadīths* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, *Sunans* of Tirmidhī, Ibn Māja and Dārimī, and the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, 8 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1936), 4:473.

2 The idea that good words ascend to God is found in Q.35:10: *To Him good words ascend, and the pious deed He exalts.*

3 The editors of the Dār Ḥajar edition remark that there is no text connected beyond the verse *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them* following this *isnād*. They mention a report from Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-manthūr* in their notes; see 21:44 (note 2) of their edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them*, "The heaven and earth do not weep for a disbeliever. The righteous believer's earthly marks (*maʿālim*) weep for him, as does the abode of his deeds in the heaven."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And the heaven and the earth wept not for them*, "Any place where a believer prayed will weep for him upon his or her death, and any place in the heaven where a good deed ascended will weep for him too."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—al-Minhāl—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said: Ibn ʿAbbās was asked, "Do the heaven and earth weep for anyone?" He replied, "Yes. Every single person has a portal in the heaven through which his deeds ascend and from which his provision comes down to him. The places on earth where he remembered God and prayed all weep upon his death, and his celestial portal weeps as well. The people of Pharaoh lacked any virtuous traces and were bereft of any goodness that ascended to the heaven. Therefore, neither the heaven nor earth wept for them."

Q. 44:31

INTERPRETATION OF *nor were they reprieved*

He says: *Nor were* the people who deserved the punishment capable of postponing it; rather, they were hastened to it when they upset their Lord (Mighty and Majestic is He).

INTERPRETATION OF *And We delivered the Children of Israel from the shameful torment*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *We delivered the Children of Israel from the torment*, by which Pharaoh and his people were chastised, that was *muhīn*, meaning "humiliating to them".

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*And We delivered the Children of Israel from the shameful torment*, of having their boys killed and their girls spared."

INTERPRETATION OF (*We delivered them*) *from Pharaoh. Lo! he was a tyrant of the excessive ones*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "We delivered the Children of

Israel from the torment *from Pharaoh*." The words *from Pharaoh* serve as a reiteration of and aposition for "from" in His statement *from a shameful torment*. The clause *Lo! he was a tyrant of the excessive ones* means that Pharaoh was tyrannical, haughty (*mustaʿlī*) and arrogant regarding His Lord. [He was] *of the excessive ones*, meaning among the transgressors who far exceed their bounds. God (Majestic is His praise) is saying that Pharaoh was a transgressor, only on account of his disbelief and arrogance[1] towards His Lord (Mighty and Majestic is He).

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:32] *And We chose them, by (special) knowledge, above (all) creatures.* [44:33] *And We gave them signs wherein was a clear trial.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *We chose* the Children of Israel by Our *knowledge* of them above their contemporaries, meaning the people at the time of Moses (ṣ). Q. 44:33

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And We chose them, by (special) knowledge, above (all) creatures* (*ʿālamīn*), "In other words, they were chosen over their contemporaries, and every age has its people (*ʿālam*)."[2]

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And We chose them, by (special) knowledge, above (all) ʿālamīn*, "The people of their age."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. 'Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And We chose them, by (special) knowledge, above (all) creatures*, "Above all the people in their midst."

INTERPRETATION OF *And We gave them signs wherein was a clear trial*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: We gave them lessons and exhortations, in which there were tests making clear, for all who reflect, that this was a test by which God (Exalted is He) tested them.

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *a trial (balāʾ)* in this verse.

1 Literally, "a possessor of transgression and arrogance (*dhā-ʿtidāʾ…wa'stikbār*)"; Dār Hajar, 21:46.
2 For a comprehensive explanation of the word *ʿālam*, see Ṭabarī's commentary above on Q.1:2.

OPINION: Some of them said: Their trial was through possession of His bounties.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And We gave them signs wherein was a clear trial*, "God delivered them from their enemy, then He parted the sea for them, shaded them with clouds, and sent down *manna* and quail [from the sky]."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, their trial was by means of ease and hardship.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd explained His statement *And We gave them signs wherein was a clear trial* by reciting *We try you with evil and with good, for ordeal* (Q.21:35), and then he said, "*A clear trial* is for those who believe in [the signs] and those who reject them. It is a trial by which We test them and try them. We test them with good and evil, in order for Us to see how they react to God's signs: which ones believe in them and benefit from them, and which ones squander them." Q. 44:34

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding this which is most likely to be correct is to say: Truly God (Exalted is His remembrance) informed the Children of Israel that He gave them signs wherein there would be trials and tests for them. These trials and tests exist in periods of ease and periods of hardship. There is no indication, either by means of a report or reason, that God is only referring to some trials rather than others. Rather, God has tested them in both states, together, and it is permissible for Him to test them by both ease and hardship. If the matter is as we have described it, then the correct opinion is that we should follow what God (Majestic is His praise) said, namely that He tested them.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:34] *Lo! these (polytheists) are saying,* [44:35] *There is nothing but our first death, and we shall not be raised again.* [44:36] *Bring back our fathers, if you speak the truth!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) informs us of what the polytheist Quraysh were saying to the Prophet of God (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *lo! these* polytheists, from among your people, *are saying, There is nothing but our first death*, by which we die, and it is the "first death", *and we shall not be raised*

or resurrected *again* after our deaths. [They say this as an act of] rejecting the Resurrection, [divine] reward and [divine] punishment.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Lo! these [polytheists] are saying, There is nothing but our first death, and we shall not be raised again*, "The Arab polytheists say *and we shall not be raised again*, meaning, resurrected."

INTERPRETATION OF *Bring back our fathers, if you speak the truth!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: They said to Muḥammad (ṣ): *Bring back our fathers* who have died, *if you speak the truth* that God will resurrect us after our internment in our graves and will resuscitate us after our deaths.

The Prophet (ṣ) alone is addressed in this verse even though the verb *you speak the truth* is in the second person plural form (*kuntum ṣādiqīn*).[1] This is like the verse, *O Prophet, when you do divorce women* (*idhā ṭallaqtum*; Q.65:1) and the verse, *My Lord, send me back* (*rabbi 'rjiʿūni*; Q.23:99). We have already explained this stylistic feature in many places in our book.[2]

Q. 44:36

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:37] *Are they better, or the folk of Tubbaʿ and those before them? We destroyed them, for surely they were guilty.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *are* these polytheists among your people *better, or the folk of Tubbaʿ*? In other words, Tubbaʿ the Ḥimyarite,[3] as I was informed by:

1 The content of this passage is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:42.

2 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's commentary refer readers to 2:404, which is his commentary on Q.2:107.

3 According to A. F. L. Beeston, Tubbaʿ is "a term used by Muslim writers as a dynastic title... for those Himyarite rulers who, between the late 3rd century and the early 6th century A.D., controlled the whole of Southwest Arabia;" see Beeston, "Tubbaʿ", *EI²*. He identifies the "first Tubbaʿ" as Shammar Yurʾish, who defeated the Sabeans based at Mārib and the local ruler of the Hadramawt in eastern Yemen on the eve of 300 CE, and remarks that epigraphic evidence affirms the existence of most of the Tubbaʿ kings found in the literary sources. Ṭabarī mentions a few of the kings of Tubbaʿ in volumes 4 and 5 of the translation of his *Tārīkh*. Abū ʿUbayda says, "[They are] kings from Yemen, each one of which is named Tubbaʿ because he follows (*yatbaʿu*) his predecessor...the status of Tubbaʿ in pre-Islamic times is the same as the status of the caliphate in Islamic times: they are the greatest kings of the Arabs"; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:209.

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) *Are they better, or the folk of Tubbaʿ*, "The Ḥimyarite".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Are they better, or the folk of Tubbaʿ*, "It was mentioned to us that Tubbaʿ was a man from Ḥimyar who raised armies that confounded Ḥīra[1] and then went to Samarqand and destroyed it. It was also mentioned to us that when he wrote letters, he wrote 'In the name of the One Who is named (*tusammā*) and owns the land, sea, cloudless sky and wind.' It was mentioned to us that Kaʿb [al-Aḥbār] would say, '[Tubbaʿ] was described as a righteous man—God abased his people, but not him.' ʿĀʾisha used to say, 'Do not vilify Tubbaʿ, for he was a righteous man.'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said: ʿĀʾisha said, "Tubbaʿ was a righteous man." Kaʿb [al-Aḥbār] said, "God rebuked his people, but He did not rebuke him." Q. 44:37

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Tamīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Saʿīd b. Jubayr reported that Tubbaʿ gifted the Kaʿba a shroud. Saʿīd refused to let anyone vilify him.

INTERPRETATION OF *and those before them*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Are* these Qurayshī polytheists *better or the folk of Tubbaʿ and those* disbelieving communities *before them*? He says: No, they are not any better than these folks, such that We might forgive them and not destroy them, even though they reject God. This is how We treated the disbelieving communities of the past whom We destroyed.

INTERPRETATION OF *for surely they were guilty*

He says: Surely the folk of Tubbaʿ and the early communities, whom We destroyed, were destroyed only on account of their crimes and their disbelief in their Lord.

It was suggested that the *kasra* under the letter *alif* of *innahum* (*surely they*) serves to initiate a new sentence, even though it is sufficiently clear from the context that this sentence is connected to the previous one and is a condition [for their destruction].

1 Ḥīra is a city in southern Iraq that served as the capital for the Lakhmid Arab dynasty prior to Islam.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:38] *And We did not create the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, in play.* [44:39] *We did not create them except by the truth; but most of them know not.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And We did not create the* seven *heavens* and the earths *and all* the created things *between them in play. We did not create them except by the truth.* He says: *We did not create* the heavens and the earth *except by the truth*, without which nothing organized (*tadbīr*) can flourish.

The only thing God (Exalted is His remembrance) means by that is an admonition that the Resurrection and Requital are true. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: We did not create people devoid of purpose, bringing them into existence and giving life to whomever We willed, then annihilating them, without testing their degree of obedience to the commands and prohibitions. [Nor do We do this] without any form of reward for the obedient person's obedience and punishment for the disobedient person's disobedience. Rather, We created all that to test whomever among Our creation We will to test, by means of whichever tests among Our commands and prohibitions We choose, that We may reward those who do evil with that which they have done, and that We may reward those who do good with goodness.[1]

Q. 44:38-9

But most of them know not. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *But most of* these folks who associate partners with God *know not* that God created that for them. They are neither afraid of the grievous consequences of God's displeasure nor desirous of the reward for their good deeds, because of their rejection of the Return [to God].

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:40] *Assuredly the Day of Distinction*[2] *is the term for all of them,* [44:41] *A day when friend cannot avail friend, nor can they be helped,* [44:42] *Save him on whom God has mercy. Lo! He is the Mighty, the Merciful.*

1 This final sentence echoes Q.53:31: *And to God belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, that He may reward those who do evil with that which they have done, and reward those who do good with goodness.*

2 Ṭabarī employs the particle *bayna* in his explanation of *yawm al-faṣl*, which gives it the meaning of "setting a limit between", (Hava, 565) or distinguishing the righteous from the iniquitious. Pickthall, Arberry and Abdel Haleem translate *yawm al-faṣl* as "the Day of Decision", while Muhammad Asad offers "the Day of Distinction [between the true and the false]".

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Assuredly* the day God judges a distinction between His creation on the basis of the good or evil they did previously, in their worldly lifetimes, on which He rewards the righteous with goodness and the evil doers with evil, *is the term for all of them.* He says: "[It is] *the term* for the reunion of all of them, together," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Assuredly the Day of Distinction is the term for all of them*, "This is the day on which He distinguishes between people on the basis of their deeds."

INTERPRETATION OF *A day when friend cannot avail friend, nor can they be helped*

He says: No cousin will be able to defend his cousin,[1] and no companion can protect his companion from God's punishment that they deserve, *nor can they be helped.* He says: "Some of them will not be able to assist others, as they will be seeking refuge from the One levying upon them the punishment, just as they used to do on earth," as we have been informed by:

Q. 44:40-2

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *A day when friend cannot avail friend, nor can they be helped*, "On this day, O Son of Adam, all bonds between people will be severed and people will be left with their deeds. On that day, whoever is left with goodness has attained felicity as his final state, and whoever is left with evil has attained damnation as his final state.

INTERPRETATION OF *Save him on whom God has mercy*

The grammarians disagreed over the role of *him* (*man*) in *Save* him *on whom God has mercy*. One of the Basran grammarians[2] said, concerning *Save him on whom God has mercy*, "This is an aposition (*badal*) for the unwritten pronoun representing the people mentioned in the verse *nor can they be helped.* If you wish, *Save him on whom God has mercy* could be the subject and the predicate could be an ellipsis, so the verse would mean: "*Save him on whom God has mercy*, who does not need any help."

One of the Kufan grammarians[3] said, concerning *Save him on whom*

1 Abū ʿUbayda also glosses *mawlā* in this context as "cousin" (literally, "son of the paternal uncle"); *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:209.

2 This is al-Akhfash's opinion; see his *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:691.

3 The grammatical explanations in this paragraph are found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:42.

God has mercy: some of the believers intercede on behalf of others. If you wish, "him" (*man*) can be read in the nominative case, as if you said: *lā yaqūmu aḥadun illā fulānun*.[1] Or, if you wish, you could put *man* in the accusative on account of the exception and its separation from the earlier part of the passage, meaning "O God, [help all] except him on whom God has mercy."

Another Kufan said: Its meaning is: *Friend cannot avail friend* except he whom God grants permission to intercede. This clause cannot be an aposition for *nor can they be helped* because the exceptive particle *illā* affirms something, while the preceding clause negates something. An aposition must be consistent with the entity it replaces. Nor can this be the beginning of a new sentence, because it is impossible to open a sentence with the second half of an exception clause.

Q. 44:43-4

ṬABARĪ SAID: The [grammatical] opinion which is most likely to be correct is that the word *man* is in the nominative case, with the following meaning: *A day when friend cannot avail friend save him on whom God has mercy*, for he can avail him and intercede, on his behalf, with his Lord.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! He is the Mighty, the Merciful*

God (Majestic is His praise) describes Himself, saying: *Lo!* God is *the Mighty* in his vengeance towards His enemies and *the Merciful* with His Friends, the people who obey Him.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:43] *Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm,* [44:44] *The food of the sinner!* [44:45] *Like molten brass, it seethes in their bellies* [44:46] *As the seething of boiling water.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm*—which He reported [to us] grows at the foundation of Hell, and which He made as food for the residents of Hell—its fruit in Hell, and is *the food* of the sinner [who sinned] against his Lord in the temporal world. The word *athīm* ("sinner") means "one who possesses sin" and derives from the verb *athima/ya'thamu*; he is an *athīm*. What is meant by "sinner" in this verse is restricted to someone whose sin is rejection of his Lord and not any other sin.[2]

Muḥammad b. Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-

1 "Nobody stood up except so-and-so."

2 This is in contrast to al-Farrāʾ, who glosses *sinner* as "the wicked person"; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:43.

Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—Hammām b. al-Ḥārith—Abū'l-Dardāʾ used to teach Qurʾān recitation to a man who recited the verses, *Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm, the food of the sinner* (*al-athīm*), as "the food of the orphan (*al-yatīm*)." Abū'l-Dardāʾ said, "Say, *Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm, the food of* the wicked!"

Abū Kurayb—Yaḥyā b. ʿĪsā—al-Aʿmash—Abū Yaḥyā—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "If just a drop of the Zaqqūm tree came down to the earth, people's provisions would become rotten."

Abū'l-Sāʾib—Abū Muʿāwiya—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—Hammām said, "Abū'l-Dardāʾ used to teach Qurʾān recitation to a man who recited the verses, *Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm, the food of the sinner*, as 'the food of the orphan.' Abu'l-Dardāʾ repeated this verse many times, until he realized that the man did not comprehend his error. Finally, he said, '*Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm, the food of* the wicked!'"

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm, the food of the sinner*, "[This refers to] Abū Jahl."[1]

Q. 44:45

INTERPERTATION OF *Like molten metal, it seethes in their bellies*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo! the Zaqqūm tree*, whose fruit We have made the food of the disbelievers in Gehenna, is like lead or silver or any other substance that melts in fire. It melts when its heat reaches its upper limit and becomes intense—the intense blackness [of the Zaqqūm tree is like this melted lead or silver.].[2]

We have sufficiently clarified the meaning of *muhl* ("molten metal") previously, such that the repetition of the evidence and interpreters' disagreements regarding it are unnecessary at this place.[3] However, we would like to mention some scholars' opinions here that I did not mention there:

Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār—Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt—Abū Kudayna [Yaḥyā b. al-Muhallab]—Qābūs—his father said, "I asked Ibn ʿAbbās about the meaning of God's statement (Exalted is He) *Like molten metal*, and he said, 'Like oil dregs'."

1 Abū Jahl was the leader of the Quraysh who opposed the Prophet Muḥammad and was killed at the battle of Badr in 634; for more, see the above commentary on Q.36:9.

2 I am grateful for the punctuation that the Dār Hajar editors inserted into this sentence, which elucidated it for me; Dār Hajar, 21:54.

3 The word *muhl* appears in three places in the Qurʾān: Q.18:29; here (Q.44:45); and Q.70:8. For Ṭabarī's complete discussion, see his commentary on Q.18:29.

ʿAlī b. Sahl—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning **His** statement *Like molten metal, it seethes in their bellies*, "It is black, like burned oil."

Abū Kurayb, Abū'l-Sā'ib, and Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn Idrīs—Muṭarrif—ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd [al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Like molten metal*, "[It is] a viscous liquid, like the dregs of oil."

Yaḥyā b. Ṭalḥa—Sharīk—Muṭarrif—a man—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Like molten metal*, "Like oil dregs".

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Ṣamad—Shuʿba—Khulayd—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—Ibn ʿAbbās saw melted silver and said, "This is *muhl*."

Abū Kurayb—Abū Muʿāwiya—ʿAmr b. Maymūn—his father—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning His statement *like molten metal which burns the faces* (Q.18:29): [Ibn Masʿud] entered the treasury (*bayt al-māl*), took out a cup[1] that was in it and burned it until it glistened. Then he said, "Where is the person who wanted to know the meaning of *muhl*? This is *muhl*."[2]

Q. 44:45

Ibn Bashshār—Ibn Abī ʿAdī; and Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Khālid b. al-Ḥārith; both Ibn Abī ʿAdī and Khālid from ʿAwf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "It reached me that Ibn Masʿūd was asked about the meaning of *muhl*, which is said to be the beverage for the companions of Hellfire on Resurrection Day, while he was at the treasury. So, he asked for some gold and silver pieces and melted them, saying, 'This is the closest thing in this world to *muhl*, which will be like the colour of the sky on Resurrection Day and the beverage for the companions of Hellfire. The main difference is that *muhl* will be much, much hotter than this.'" (The text of this report comes from Ibn Bashshār's narration; Ibn al-Muthannā's narration is nearly identical to it.)

Abū Kurayb and Abū'l-Sā'ib—Ibn Idrīs—Ashʿath [said]: Among the statements of al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] is the following: "ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd was a man whom God honoured by granting him companionship with Muḥammad (ṣ). ʿUmar (r) appointed him to be in charge of the treasury, and he directed himself to an enormous amount of broken [tarnished] silver. He dug a trench and then ordered an immense amount of firewood to be placed in it and set alight. The silver melted and oozed to the point that its original colour returned. Ibn Masʿūd said, 'See who

1 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *siqāya*; 21:56 (note 1).
2 For a similar report, see Guillaume, 722–3.

is at the door,' and a group of people were brought in. Then he said to them, 'Look! This is the closest thing we have seen in the temporal world resembling the *muhl* [of the Hereafter].'"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement beginning with *Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm*, "It has been mentioned to us that a cup of gold and silver was gifted to Ibn Masʿūd. He ordered a trench to be dug, filled it with an immense amount of firewood, and then this cup was cast into it. As it melted and oozed, he said to his servant, 'Summon all the Kufans who are in our vicinity.' He summoned a group and when they came, [Ibn Masʿūd] said, 'Do you see this?' 'Yes', they replied. Ibn Masʿūd said, 'We have not seen anything closer in the temporal world to *muhl* than this gold and silver, when it melted and oozed.'"

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—ʿAbd Allāh b. Sufyān al-Asadī said, "'Abd Allāh b. Masʿūd melted some silver and said, 'Whoever wants to see what *muhl* is, look at this.'"

Q. 44:45

Bishr—Yazīd—Qābūs—his father [Ḥuṣayn b. Jundab]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *The Day when the sky will be like molten metal* (Q.70:8), "Like oil dregs".

Yaḥyā b. Ṭalḥa—Sharīk—Sālim—Saʿīd [b. Jubayr] said, concerning *Like muhl*, "Like oil dregs".

Ibn al-Muthannā—Yaʿmar b. Bishr—Ibn al-Mubārak—Abū'l-Ṣabbāḥ—Yazīd b. Abī Sumayya—Ibn ʿUmar said, "Do you know what *muhl* is? *Muhl* is the *muhl* of oil, meaning its final remains."

[Ibn al-Muthannā] said, "A nearly identical report was transmitted to me from Ibrāhīm Abū Isḥāq al-Ṭālaqānī—Ibn al-Mubārak—Abū'l-Ṣabbāḥ al-Aylī—Yazīd b. Abī Sumayya—Ibn ʿUmar."

Abū Kurayb—Rishdīn b. Saʿd—ʿAmr b. al-Ḥārith—Darrāj Abū'l-Samḥ—Abū'l-Haytham—Abū Saʿīd [al-Khudrī]—the Prophet (ṣ) said, concerning His statement *with water like muhl* (Q.18:29), "Like oil sediment. If you bring it close to your face, the skin of your face will fall off."[1]

A nearly identical report was transmitted to us from:

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Yaʿmar b. Bishr—Ibn al-Mubārak—

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found also in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī; the *Musnads* of Ibn Hanbal and Abū Yaʿlā; the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Humayd, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh; the *Sahih* of Ibn Ḥibbān; the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim; and Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-imān*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 4:400.

Rishdīn b. Sa'd—'Amr b. al-Ḥārith—Abū'l-Samḥ—Abū'l-Haytham—Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī—the Prophet (ṣ).

INTERPRETATION OF *in their bellies*

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of this phrase. Most of the Medinan, Basran and Kufan reciters read *taghlī* ("seethes"), with a *tā'*, meaning: "Lo! the tree of Zaqqūm seethes in their bellies."[1] They read *taghlī* in the feminine to correlate with "tree" [*shajara*, which is feminine]. Some Meccans recited *yaghlī*, meaning: "The food of the sinner seethes" or "The molten brass (*muhl*) seethes."[2] Some of them read *yaghlī* in the masculine, because "food" is masculine, and they interpreted it to mean that the food is what seethes in their bellies, while others did so because "molten" is masculine, and they interpreted it as a descriptor of the molten metal that is seething.[3]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both readings are well known and of sound meaning, so the reciter will be correct reading either one. Q. 44:46-7

INTERPRETATION OF *As the seething of boiling water*

He says: This seethes in the bellies of these damned people like the seething of boiled water. It is water that has been heated by fire to its maximum temperature.

Some say that *ḥamīm* means *maḥmūm*, because the nominal form *fa'īl* can serve as a passive participle, as in the case of *qatīl* meaning: "one who was killed (*maqtūl*)."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:47] (*And it will be said*), *Take him and drag him to the midst of Hell,*
[44:48] *Then pour upon his head the torment of boiling water.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Take him*, meaning take this *sinner* [from Q.44:44] whom God (Majestic is His praise) has reported will have food from the tree of Zaqqūm, *and drag him*. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Push and pull him.

1 Ibn 'Aṭiyya ascribes this reading to Nāfi', Abū 'Amr, Ḥamza, Kisā'ī, Abū Bakr (from 'Āṣim), 'Amr b. Maymūn, Abū Razīn, al-A'raj, Ibn Muḥaysin and Talḥa; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:76.
2 Ibn 'Aṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Āmir, Ḥafṣ (from 'Āṣim), Mujāhid and Qatāda; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:76. Both readings are ascribed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.
3 A similar explanation is found in al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:43.

The verb "drag" is *'atala/ya'tilu/'atlan*; it refers to moving someone by pushing and pulling. For example, the statement of al-Farazdaq:

laysa'l-kirāmu bi-nāḥilika abāhumu
ḥattā turadda ilā 'aṭiyyata tu'talu

Nobility is not what their father gave you
until you are sent back to a gift that is dragged.

In other words, it was driven by pushing and dragging.

INTERPRETATION OF *to the midst (sawā') of Hell*

Meaning *to* the middle *of Hell*. The meaning of the passage is: It will be said on Resurrection Day: *Take* this *sinner* and drive him, by pushing his back, to the middle of Hellfire.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning the meaning of His statement *drag him*. An account of those who said that: Q. 44:47-8

Muḥammad b. 'Amr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū 'Āṣim al-Nabīl—'Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both 'Īsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Take him and drag him to the midst of Hell*, "Take him and push him."

The verb *drag him* has two dialects. Most of the Kufan and Basran, and some of the Medinan reciters, read it with a *kasra* under the *tā'*. Some Medinans and Meccans [read *fa-'trulū*] with a *damma* above the *tā'*.[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in my estimation, is that both dialects are well known among the Arabs, since one can say *'atala/ya'tilu* or *ya'tulu*, so the reciter will be correct reading either one.

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *to the sawā' of Hell*, "To the middle of Hellfire".

INTERPRETATION OF *Then pour upon his head the torment of boiling water*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Then pour on the head* of this *sinner the torment of boiling water*, meaning the hot water we have described above.

1 The manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* are defective at this point, so I am following the Dār Hajar editors' reconstruction on the basis of other sources; 21:60 (note 1). Both Ibn 'Aṭiyya and Ibn al-Jazarī ascribe the reading with a *damma* above the *tā'* (*fa-'tulū*) to Nāfi', Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Āmir, along with a few other reciters, while everyone else reads *fa-'tilū*; Ibn 'Aṭiyya, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:77; Ibn al-Jazarī, *Nashr*, 2:277.

This is the water that God described as *Whereby that which is in their bellies, and their skins too, will be melted* (Q.22:20); I have clarified its meaning there [in my commentary].

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:49] (*Saying*), *Taste! Lo! you are the mighty, the noble!*
[44:50] *Lo! this is the thing of which you used to doubt.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It will be said to this damned *sinner*, *Taste* this torment by which you are being punished right now. *Lo! you are the mighty* among your people and *the noble* one above them.

It has been alleged that these verses came down on account of Abū Jahl b. Hishām.

An account of those who said that:

Q. 44:49

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said,

> *Then pour upon his head the torment of boiling water* (Q.44:48) came down on account of the enemy of God, Abū Jahl. He met the Prophet (ṣ), who grasped him and shook him, saying, "[It is] closer to you, Abū Jahl, it is closer! [It is] closer to you, even closer![1] *Taste! Lo! you are the mighty, the noble!*" This encounter came about because Abū Jahl said, "Is Muḥammad threatening me, when I am the mightiest person between these two mountains?"[2] Other verses which came down in reference to Abū Jahl include: *and obey not of them any sinner or disbeliever* (Q.76:24) and *Nay, obey not thou him. But prostrate yourself, and draw near (to God)* (Q.96:19). Qatāda said: The following verses came down about Abū Jahl and his companions, whom God (Blessed and Exalted is He) killed at the battle of Badr: *Have you not seen those who gave the grace of God in exchange for thanklessness and led their people down to the Abode of Loss?* (Q.14:28).

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*Take him and drag him* (Q.44:47) came down on account of Abū Jahl. Abū Jahl said, 'I am the mightiest and noblest person between these two mountains!' Then God (Mighty and

1 This wording is very close to Q.75:34–5.
2 These two mountains would be Safa and Marwa in Mecca. Pilgrims run between them in a ritual that is based upon Hagar's quest for water for her son Ishmael.

Majestic is He) replied, *Taste! Lo! you are the mighty, the noble!*"

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Take him and drag him to the midst of Hell* (Q.44:47), "This is regarding Abū Jahl."

QUESTION: How can someone, who is brought low by the torment God described [in the Qurʾān] and humiliated by being dragged to the middle of Hell, be addressed as *Lo! you are the mighty, the noble*?

RESPONSE: His statement, *Lo! you are the mighty, the noble*, does not actually describe the person who claims to be mighty and noble; rather, it is God's rebuke and reproach of this person, who described himself by these qualities in the temporal world. These words are to be understood as a direct quote [of Abū Jahl], because in this world he would say, *Lo! you are the mighty, the noble*, but in the Hereafter, as he is being tormented by Hellfire, it will be said to him, "*Taste* this dreadful stuff right now! You used to claim to be mighty and noble, yet now you are abased and despicable—where is the might and nobility of which you would boast? Can you not fend off this torment with your supposed might?"

Q. 44:49

Ibn Bashshār—Ṣafwān b. ʿĪsā—Ibn ʿAjlān—Saʿīd al-Maqburī—Abū Hurayra said: Kaʿb [al-Aḥbār] said, "God has three garments (*athwāb*): He wraps His waist with might, He wears a shirt of mercy, and He dons a cloak of majesty (Exalted is His remembrance). Whoever makes a claim to being mighty by means of something that God has not bestowed upon him will be told [in the Hereafter], *Taste! Lo! you are the mighty, the noble!* If someone is merciful to other people, it is due to God's cloaking him in His shirt [of mercy]. And if anyone becomes arrogant, it is due to God's snatching away His cloak from him. Truly God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, 'It is not appropriate for Me to admit into the Garden anyone who has snatched away My cloak.'"

The Qurʾān reciters of the garrison cities all agreed that this verse should be recited *dhuq innaka*, with a *kasra* under the *alif* of *innaka*, indicating the beginning of a new sentence and a direct quotation of the person who said, "Lo! I am the mighty, the noble." One of the later reciters read *dhuq annaka* with a *fatha* on the *alif*, due to the influence of the verb *dhuq*, as if the meaning of the sentence were: "Eat this statement that you said back on earth."[1]

1 Al-Farrāʾ provides a report with an *isnād* that it was the Prophet's elder grandson, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, who recited *annaka* instead of *innaka*; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:43. Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Kisāʾī, who, according to him, claimed that al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī read it this way; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:77.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The only acceptable reading, in our estimation, is *innaka*, with a *kasra* under the *alif*, in accordance with what I described, because of the consensus of the [early] reciters. The other reading is irregular and contravenes the reading upon which there is consensus.[1] This consensus among the early and later master reciters is sufficient proof that reading *annaka* is an error, as is the farfetched meaning generated by it, which diverges from the interpretation of the interpreters.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! this is the thing of which you used to doubt*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It will be said [to the sinner]: *Lo! this* torment, which is afflicting you right now, is the torment whose existence you doubted while you were in the temporal world. You argued against its existence and were uncertain of its reality. Now you have encountered it, so taste it!

❁

Q. 44:50–1

❁

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:51] *Lo! those who were God-conscious will be in a place secured.* [44:52] *Amid gardens and watersprings,* [44:53] *Attired in (garments of) silk and silk embroidery, facing one another.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Those people who were God-conscious, by obeying Him and avoiding disobedience of Him, are in a fixed place, secure in that place from the feared places of the temporal world—places filled with diseases, defects, toil and sorrows.

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *in a place secured.* Most of the reciters of Medina read *fi muqāmin amīn*, with a *ḍamma* on the *mīm* of *muqām*, with the meaning: "a fixed place that is secure from being moved."[2] Most of the reciters of the two garrison cities, Kufa and Basra, read *fi maqāmin* with a *fatḥa* on the *mīm*, meaning what we described, interpreting it to mean that they are in a secure place.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both readings are overwhelmingly attested in the garrison cities and both meanings are valid, so the reciter will be correct reading either one.

1 The Dār Hajar editors observe that this reading is not irregular, given that Kisā'ī, one of the seven most authoritative reciters, reads the verse as *annaka*; 21:62 (notes 4 and 5).

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Nāfiʿ, Ibn ʿĀmir, Abū Jaʿfar, Shayba, Qatāda, Ibn ʿUmar, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and al-Aʿraj; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:77. Everyone else, including Abū Rajā', ʿĪsā, Yaḥyā and al-Aʿmash, read *maqām*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lo! those who were God-conscious will be in a place secured*, "By God! They are *secured* from Satan, toil and sorrows."

INTERPRETATION OF *Amid gardens and watersprings*

The *gardens and watersprings* are an elucidation of the *secured place*. In other words, the *secured place* consists of *gardens and watersprings*. The word *jannāt* means "enclosed gardens (*basātīn*)" and *ʿuyūn* means: "springs of water flowing at the roots of the trees in these gardens."

INTERPRETATION OF *Attired in (garments of) silk and silk embroidery*

❁

He says: "These God-conscious people in these gradens will be wearing garments of *sundus*, which is soft silk brocade, and *istabraq*, which is coarse silk brocade," as we have been informed by:

Q. 44:52–3

❁

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *Attired in (garments of) sundus and istabraq*, "*Istabraq* is coarse silk brocade."

It has been said: In the verse *Attired in (garments of) silk and silk embroidery, facing one another* the word "garments" is unmentioned, because it is understood sufficiently from the context.

INTERPRETATION OF *facing one another*

Some of them meet each other face to face in the Garden, and none of them sees someone else's backside. We have related previously the narrations about this sufficiently, so there is no need to repeat them here.[1]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:54] *Even so (it will be). And We shall wed them to fair ones with wide, lovely eyes.* [44:55] *They call therein for every fruit in safety.* [44:56] *They taste not death therein, after the first death. And He has saved them from the doom of Hell,* [44:57] *A bounty from your Lord—that is the supreme triumph.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Just as we bestowed upon these

1 See Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.15:47 (not included in this translation).

God-conscious people honours in the Hereafter, such as placing them in gardens and dressing them in garments of smooth and coarse silk brocade, we will honour them, as *We shall wed them* in **[the gardens]** to women *with wide, lovely eyes* (*ḥūr*), who are pure white.[1]

The singular of *ḥūr* is *ḥawrā'*. Mujāhid would say, concerning the meaning of *ḥūr*, what has been narrated to me from:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *wa-zawwajnāhum bi-ḥūrin ʿīn*, "[God says:] 'And We shall marry them to *ḥūr*.' The *ḥūr* are 'females who dazzle the eye, whose legs [are so white that their] marrow is visible through their [diophanous] clothes.'[2] One who looks sees his face in the midsection of one of them, reflecting like a mirror, due to the smoothness of her skin, and the purity of its colour."

Q. 44:54

This statement by Mujāhid, that *ḥūr* means "females who dazzle the eye", does not make any sense in the Arabic language, because *ḥūr* can only be the plural of *ḥawrā'*, just like *ḥumr* is the plural of *ḥamrā'* ("red") and *sūd* is the plural of *sawdā'* ("black"). The word *ḥawrā'* is in the form *faʿlā'* from *ḥawar*, which means "pure white". This is why pure white flour is called *ḥuwwārā*,[3] which I have clarified elsewhere, with evidence, earlier in this book.[4]

All of the other interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Even so (it will be); and We shall wed them to ḥūr with wide, lovely eyes*, "The whiteness of [their] eyes. Ibn Masʿūd read this verse as *bi-ʿīsin ʿīn* ('with white eyes')."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *to ḥūr with wide, lovely eyes*, "With white eyes. Ibn Masʿūd read this verse as *bi-ʿīsin ʿīn*."

1 This expression is the source for the English word "houri". The expression *ḥūr ʿīn* (*fair ones with wide, lovely eyes*) occurs only four places in the Qurʾān, three of which, by pure coincidence, are among the translated passages here. The remaining three verses are Q.52:20; Q.55:72; and Q.56:22.

2 Arabic: *allāti yaḥāru fi kinna al-ṭarfu bādin mukhkhu sūqihinna min warāʾ thiyābihinna*; Dār Hajar, 21:65.

3 See Lane, *huwwārā* ("*h-w-r*").

4 See Ṭabarī's discussion of the meaning of *ḥawāriyyūn* ("Jesus' disciples") in his commentary on Q.3:52 (not included in this translation).

Ibn Masʿūd's [irregular] reading informs [us] that the meaning of *ḥūr* is not what Mujāhid took it to be, because *ʿīs* is the plural of *ʿaysā'*, which the Arabs use to describe a white camel, like what al-Aʿshā said,

wa-mahmatin nāzihin taʿwi'l-dhi'ābu bihi
kallaftu aʿyasa taḥta'l-raḥli naʿābā

Across a distant desert, in which wolves howl,
I burdened a white camel, its neck outstretched under my saddle.

Al-Aʿshā uses *al-aʿyas* to mean "a white camel". As for the word *ʿīn*, it is the plural of *ʿaynā'*, which is the large size of the eyes of these women.

INTERPRETATION OF *They call therein for every fruit in safety*

He says: These God-conscious inhabitants of the Garden call for every type of fruit they desire, *in safety* (*āminīn*) from exhausting the supply, being cut off from it or from any misfortune harming them. He says: This fruit is unlike any fruit we have ever eaten on earth! [They] used to fear the hardship of [the fruit] running out, or rotting, along with losing it, or periods without it.

Q. 44:55-6

Qatāda took the interpretation of *āminīn* in the following way, as we were informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *They call therein for every fruit in safety*, "They are safe from death, disease and Satan."

INTERPRETATION OF *They taste not death therein, after the first death*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: These God-conscious folks in the Garden do not taste *any death* after (*baʿd*) *the first death* they tasted in the temporal world.

One of the experts in the Arabic language[1] interpreted *illā* to mean "except (*siwā*)" in this context. Therefore the passage means: "They taste not death therein, except the first death."[2] He likens it to the meaning of *illā* in His statement (Exalted is His remembrance), *And marry not those women whom your fathers married*, except *what has already happened* (*of that nature*) *in the past* (Q.4:22).

1 Al-Farrāʾ offers a lengthy defense of assigning the meaning of *siwā* ("except") to *illā*; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:44.

2 This is how Pickthall translates the verse: *They taste not death therein, save the first death*. Arberry's translation is nearly identical to it. Ibn ʿAṭiyya also disagrees with Ṭabarī's dismissal of the meaning of "except" in this context and considers this a perfectly sound interpretation; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:78.

ṬABARĪ SAID: This is not how the verse should be interpreted, in my estimation. It is generally understood if one were to say, "Today I am not going to taste any food, *illā* the food I tasted prior to today," that the speaker has food today, different from all other foods, and will eat it. If that is how it is generally, then, according to this interpretation, His statement "illā *the first death*" would necessitate that [the inhabitants of the Garden] would be tasting a death [in the Garden] of the type they had tasted earlier, which of course is impossible, because God (Mighty and Majestic is He) safeguards them from death the moment they enter the Garden.

However, it is possible to assign *illā* the meaning of "after (*baʿd*)", due to the proximity of their meanings in this context. For example, if someone said, "Today, I will not speak to anyone *illā* a man who is with ʿAmr," he has forced himself not to talk to anyone on that day *after* he has spoken with this man, who is with ʿAmr. It is as if he had said, "I will not speak with anyone today after a man who is with ʿAmr." The words *baʿd* and *illā* have very close meanings in this context. It is the custom of the Arabs to put one word in the place of another when their meanings are close. For example, *rajāʾ* ("desire") is occasionally close to the meaning of *khawf* ("fear"). *Rajāʾ* implies a sense of uncertainty, since it is a desire, which, like fear, can be true or false. Concerning that, Abū Dhuʾayb said,

Q. 44:56

idhā lasaʿathu'l-dabru lam yarju lasʿahā
wa-khālafahā fi bayti nūbin ʿawāmili

When the bees sting him, he fears not their sting
But he returns, during their absence, to the hive of bees occupied with honey-gathering.[1]

The meaning of *lam yarju* here is "he does not fear".

Another example of this practice is the substitution of *ẓann* ("supposition") for *ʿilm* ("knowledge") that has not been obtained by means of the eyes, and has only been obtained by inference or a report, as the poet said,

fa-qultu lahum ẓunnū bi-alfay mudajjajin
sarātuhumu fi'l-fārisi'l-musarradi

I said to them, 'Be certain of 2,000 armed men
whose leaders are in Persian chain mail.'

The word *ẓunnū* means "Be certain" or "Know that there are 2,000 armed men." The word *ẓann* is used in place of *yaqīn* ("certainty") when the

1 This is a slight modification of the translation of these verses in Lane, "*kh-l-f*".

speaker conveying this did not see the 2,000 armed men with his eyes. Rather, what this informant is informing them, using the verb *ẓunnū*, is knowledge of something he has not seen. He is putting one "verb of the heart"[1] in the place of another one, due to the proximity in their meanings. There are more equivalent cases than I can possibly mention of this, where two words are close in some of their meanings, yet different in other meanings. The Arabs substitute one for the other only in the cases where the two words share a similar meaning; and likewise in His statement *They taste not death therein, after (illā) the first death,* [the word] *illā* is put in the place of *baʿd* because of what has been described, concerning the proximity of the meanings of *illā* and *baʿd* in this context. This interpretation also applies to *And marry not those women whom your fathers married, after (illā) what has already happened (of that nature) in the past* (Q.4:22), which means, "after that which you have done in the pre-Islamic period." If *illā* were interpreted as "except" in this verse, it would only be a misplaced explanation and an elucidation of it, leading to the most egregious confusion for the person who wished to know its correct meaning.

Q. 44:57

INTERPRETATION OF *And He has saved them from the doom of Hell, a bounty from your Lord*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O Muḥammad, the Lord of these God-conscious people protects them from the torment of Hellfire on that day, as a generous favour (*tafaḍḍulan*), from your Lord, for them, and out of goodness from Him to them for that. He does not punish them for any of their previous sins on earth and, were it not for His generous favour to them of overlooking their earthly sins, He would not have saved them from the torment of Hell. Rather, they would have experienced its great pain and adversity.

INTERPRETATION OF *that is the supreme triumph*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: These honours, which We bestowed upon these God-conscious people in the Hereafter and which I have described in these verses, are *the supreme triumph*. He says: This is the great achievement that they were seeking to attain in the temporal world, through their deeds, obedience to their Lord and consciousness of Him, whenever God tested them by acts of obedience and obligations, and avoidance of the forbidden things.

1 "Verbs of the heart (*afʿāl al-qulūb*)" are those "which signify an act that takes place in the mind" and include the verbs *ẓanna* and *ʿalima* under discussion here; Wright, 2:48.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[44:58] And We have made (this Book) easy in your language only that they may heed. [44:59] Wait then (O Muḥammad). Lo! they too are waiting.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): "O Muḥammad, We have made the recitation of this Qur'ān, which We sent down in your language, in a manner such that it is easy for these Meccan polytheists to heed its lessons and proofs, benefit from its exhortations and reflect upon its signs, whenever you recite it to them. [We did this] so that they will turn repentantly to obeying their Lord and submit to the truth that you have clarified for them," as we were informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And We have made it easy in your language*, "In other words, this Qur'ān, *only that they may heed*."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And We have made it easy in your language*, "The Qur'ān—*We have made it easy*, flowing easily from [Muḥammad's] tongue."

Q. 44:58-9

INTERPRETATION OF *Wait then (O Muḥammad). Lo! they too are waiting*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to his Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, wait for a victory from your Lord and assistance against these people, who associate partners with God, from among your people, the Quraysh. They are also waiting amongst themselves to crush you and defeat you, by obstructing the truth you have brought from anyone who wishes to accept it from you and follow you, in accordance with it.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *fa'rtaqib innahum murtaqibūn*, "Wait, for they are waiting."

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Dukhān

THE BENEFICENT
SŪRAT AL-RAḤMĀN
(Q. 55:1–78)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:1] The Beneficent [55:2] Teaches the Qur'ān. [55:3] He has created man [55:4] He has taught him the clear exposition. [55:5] The sun and the moon are according to calculation.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity! *The Beneficent teaches you the Qur'ān*, by means of His beneficence towards you, and He favours you with this when He makes you grasp that which is pleasing to your Lord and informs you of what displeases Him. [He does this] so you may obey Him, by adhering to that which makes Him pleased with you, acting in accordance with what He has commanded you [to do], and avoiding that which makes Him displeased with you. Should you heed this, you will have a claim to an immense share of His reward, and escape from the horrible pain of His retribution.

It has been narrated from Qatāda that he said, concerning that, what we have been informed of by:

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān al-ʿUqaylī—Abū'l-ʿAwwām al-ʿIjlī—Qatāda said, in his explanation of *The Beneficent teaches the Qur'ān*, "By God! This is a tremendous favour!"

INTERPRETATION OF *He has created man*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*He has created* Adam, and he is *man (insān)*," in the opinion of some of them.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *He has created man*, "*Man* is Adam."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *He has created man*, "*Man* is Adam."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is intended by that is all of humanity. *Man* is put in a singular expression because it conveys the meaning of its group, [i.e. humanity], just as it is said *Truly man is at a loss* (Q.103:2).

ṬABARĪ SAID: Neither opinion is far from the correct interpretation, due to the similarity of their apparent meanings.

INTERPRETATION OF *He has taught him the clear exposition*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *He has taught* man *the clear exposition.*

Then the interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *the clear exposition* (*bayān*) in this context.

OPINION: Some of them said: What is meant by it is the explanation (*bayān*) of the lawful and the unlawful.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *He has taught him the bayān*, "God *taught him* the explanation of the temporal world and the Hereafter. He explained what He made lawful and what He made unlawful, in order to advance this as evidence against His creatures [who deny Him]."

Q. 55:4

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*He has taught him the bayān* of the temporal world and the Hereafter, in order to advance this as evidence against [anyone who denies Him]."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān—Abū'l-ʿAwwām—Qatāda said, concerning *He has taught him the bayān*, "He has explained to [man] good and evil, and to what he can draw near and what he should shun."

OPINION: Others said: Speech (*kalām*) is meant by that. In other words, God (Mighty and Majestic is He) taught man speech.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *He has taught him the bayān*, "The *bayān* is speech."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct interpretation regarding that, is to say: Truly the meaning of that is God taught man the explanation of all he needs for his religious and worldly existence—what is lawful and unlawful, ways of life, speech and other things. [It refers to all of these things] because God does not specify the meaning of *bayān* or indicate that it means some things to the exclusion of others; rather, it is a general statement from God, since He said, *He has taught him the bayān*. It is general, like He (Majestic is His praise) made it.

INTERPRETATION OF *The sun and the moon are according to calculation*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of that.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: *The sun and the moon* move according to a formula (*bi-ḥisāb*)[1] and stations, without transgressing them.[2]

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-ʿAsqalānī—[Muḥammad b. Yūsuf] al-Firyābī—Isrāʾīl—Simāk b. Ḥarb—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "They are sent forth according to a formula and stations."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "They move according to set numbers and a formula."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Mālik said, concerning *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "In other words, according to a formula and stations."

Q. 55:5

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "According to a formula and a fixed period of time."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "They move in a calculated manner."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "Time is calculated by these two [celestial spheres]. Were it not for night and day, the sun and the moon, how could anybody calculate anything? How could anyone calculate anything if all time (*dahr*) was night-time? How could anyone calculate anything if all time was daytime?"

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān—Abū'l-ʿAwwām—Qatāda said, concerning *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "According to a formula and a fixed period of time."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Both move in a fixed manner (*bi-qadar*).

An account of those who said that:

1 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:170 (note 4). Earlier editions had *bi-ḥusbān*.

2 This is close to al-Farrāʾ's explanation of this verse; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:112. Also, see Lane, "*ḥ-s-b*".

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—ʿAbd Allāh b. Dāwūd—**Abū'l-Ṣuhbāʾ**—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *The sun and the moon are bi-ḥusbān*, "They move in a fixed manner."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: **They travel** in circular motion, like the pole of a handmill.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-ʿAsqalānī—Muḥammad b. Yūsuf **[al-Firyābī]**—Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *bi-ḥusbān*, "Like the calculated [motion] of a handmill."

[Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-ʿAsqalānī]—Muḥammad b. Yūsuf—Isrāʾīl—Abū Yaḥyā—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *bi-ḥusbān*, "They both spin like the pole of a handmill."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) *bi-ḥusbān*, "Like the calculated [motion] (*ḥusbān*) of a handmill."

Q. 55:5

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is the opinion of he who said: Its meaning is that the sun and moon move according to a formula (*bi-ḥisāb*) and in stations, because *ḥusbān* is a verbal noun from the verb *ḥasabtuhu ḥusbānan* or *ḥisāban* ("I reckoned it"), just like the verbs *kafartuhu kufrānan* ("I covered it") and *ghafartuhu ghufrānan* ("I forgave him"). It has also been said that *ḥusbān* is the plural of *ḥisāb* ("reckoning"), like *shuhbān* is the plural of *shihāb* ("ray").[1]

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over why *the sun and the moon* are in the nominative case:

[1] One of them[2] said: They are in the nominative case on account of *ḥusbān*, which has the meaning "according to a formula" (*bi-ḥisāb*), and the predicate is in an ellipsis. He said: I think, but God knows best, that He intended, "[The sun and the moon] move according to a formula."

[2] One of the grammarians, among those who rejected this explanation, said: This is erroneous; [rather], *the sun and the moon* are put in the nominative case by *according to calculation*, as "The two of them are according to a formula." He said: *The clear exposition* (*al-bayān*) governs this: *He has taught him the clear exposition* that (*al-bayān an*) *the sun and the moon are according to*

1 This sentence is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:242.

2 This is the opinion of al-Akhfash; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:701. It is also the opinion of Ṭabarī's contemporary Abū Isḥāq al-Zajjāj; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān wa-iʿrābuhu*, 4:191.

calculation.[1] He added: The verb is not elided or suppressed, except in very rare (*shādhdh*) cases of speech.[2]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:6] *The plants*[3] *and the trees bow in adoration.* [55:7] *And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the measure,* [55:8] *That you exceed not the measure,* [55:9] *But observe the balance strictly, nor fall short thereof.*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *najm* (*plants*) in this context, despite their consensus that the meaning of *shajar* ("trees") is anything that has a stem or trunk.

OPINION: Some of them said: What is meant by *najm* in this context is "plants (*nabāt*)", that is, anything that comes out (*najama*) of the ground and then spreads out over it and lacks a stem or trunk, like herbs and similar things.

Q. 55:6

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *The najm*, "*The najm* is anything that spreads out over the ground."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, concerning His statement *The najm*, "*The najm* is anything that spreads out on the ground. The Arabs call the Thīl plant[4] a *najma*."

Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-ʿAsqalānī—Rawwād b. al-Jarrāḥ—Sharīk—Suddī said, concerning *The najm and the trees bow in adoration*, "*The najm* are ground plants."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *The najm*, "*The najm* is that which lacks a stem or trunk."

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by *najm* in this context is the celestial star (*najm al-samāʾ*).

An account of those who said that:

1 Arabic: *ʿallamahu'l-bayān an al-shamsu wa'l-qamaru bi-ḥusbān*; see Wright, 2:81–2.

2 In other words, according to this grammarian, it is incorrect to assume that the verb "to move" is suppressed or elided, which is the explanation of al-Akhfash in the previous opinion. The editors of the Dār Hajar edition do not identify this grammarian, and his opinion is not found among the sources I consulted in preparation of this translation.

3 This is Ṭabarī's interpretation of *najm* in this context. Pickthall, Arberry and Asad translate *najm* as "stars", while Abdel Haleem translates it as "plants".

4 "A certain herb… that is found on the banks or sides, of rivers, in meadows"; see, Lane, "*th-y-l*".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *The najm*, "This means the celestial stars."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *The najm*, "This means the celestial star."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *The najm and the trees bow in adoration*, "It can only intend to mean *al-najm*."[1]

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī].

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is for one to say: What is meant by *najm* is any plant which comes out of the ground because syntactically it is coordinated with *the trees*, which gives it the overall meaning of: "All that rises on a stem and all that does not rise on a stem *bow in adoration* God." In other words, all things, despite their differing shapes, bow in adoration to God. This interpretation is better and more similar to the meaning of this passage than the other one.

Q. 55:6

As for His statement *the trees*, I have already described what this means previously [in my commentary on this verse].

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *and the shajar bow in adoration*, "Anything that grows upon a stem."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, concerning His statement *and the shajar*, "Anything that grows upon a stem."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *and the shajar*, "*The shajar* are the trees of the earth."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *and the shajar bow in adoration*, "Trees that have stems or trunks."

As for *bow in adoration*, what is meant by that is the shade cast from these two things when they bow, just as God (Mighty and Majestic is

1 Although it is clear from the context that Ṭabarī understands this report to support the opinion that *najm* means "celestial star", Qatāda's comment does not actually elucidate the meaning of the word *najm*.

He) said, *And to God falls prostrate whosoever is in the heavens and on the earth, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the morning and the evening hours* (Q.13:15), as we have been informed by:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Tamīm b. ʿAbd al-Muʾmin—Zibriqān—Abū Razīn and Saʿīd both said, concerning *The plants and the trees bow in adoration*, "Their shade is their bowing in adoration."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān—Abūʾl-ʿAwwām—Qatāda said, concerning *The plants and the trees bow in adoration*, "God does not forsake[1] anything among His creation without making it worship Him, either willingly or under compulsion."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *The plants and the trees bow in adoration*, "God does not abandon anything without making it worship (or serve) Him."[2]

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]. This is also the opinion of Qatāda.

Q. 55:6

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *The plants and the trees bow in adoration*, "They bow in adoration in the mornings and evenings."

It has also been remarked that the verb *yasjudān* in the verse *The plants and the trees bow in adoration* is in the dual form, even though it is the predicate of two collective nouns.[3] However, al-Farrāʾ claimed that the Arabs would use the singular form of the verb when they joined two collective nouns that are impersonal, such as lote trees and date palms. They would say, "The sheep and cattle became abundant (*qad aqbala*)" and "the date palms and lote trees developed strong limbs (*qad irtawā*)." This is their usage most of the time, but it is permissible to use the dual form in this case.[4]

1 Following the superior reading of *mā taraka'llāhu* in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:176 (note 3).

2 This report is missing from earlier editions and later manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:176 (note 4) of the Dār Hajar edition.

3 This is close to Abū ʿUbayda's position, although he does not specify that they are collective nouns; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:242.

4 These three sentences are part of a far longer discussion found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:112–13. Note that this is one of the relatively few places where Ṭabarī mentions al-Farrāʾ by name, despite his frequent (unacknowledged) use of his book.

INTERPRETATION OF *And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the measure*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And the sky He has uplifted* above the earth *and He has set* (*wadaʿa*) *the measure*. He says: *And He has set* justice between His creatures on earth.[1]

It has been alleged that this appears in the [irregular] reading of ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] as: "He has laid down the measure (*wa-khafada'l-mīzān*)." The words *khafḍ* and *waḍʿ* are close in meaning in the speech of the Arabs.[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—[ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Muḥammad]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And He has set the measure*, "[Meaning] justice (*ʿadl*)".

Q. 55:7-8

INTERPRETATION OF *That you exceed not the measure*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "That you neither oppress not wrong [anyone] according to the measure [of justice]," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *That you exceed not the measure*, "O son of Adam, be just as you wish to be treated justly. Give full measure (*awfā*), just as you wish to receive full measure. Truly, by justice, the well-being of humanity [is achieved]." Ibn ʿAbbās used to say, "O clients of the Arabs (*mawālī*)! You have been entrusted with two things, [the misuse] of which led your predecessors to perdition: this balance (*mikyāl*) and the measure (*mīzān*)."

ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd—Marwān b. Muʿāwiya—Mughīra b. Muslim—Abū'l-Mughīra said, "I heard Ibn ʿAbbās say in the market of Medina, 'O clients of the Arabs! You have been tested by two things, by which two nations were destroyed: the balance and the measure.'"

ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Āmulī—Marwān—Mughīra said, "When Ibn ʿAbbās saw a man weigh a balance in his favour, he exclaimed, 'Observe the tongue of the balance! Did not God (Mighty and Majestic is He) say, *But observe the balance strictly, nor fall short thereof* (Q.55:9)?'"

1 This is very close to al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:113.
2 This irregular reading and explanation are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:113.

INTERPRETATION OF *But observe the balance strictly, nor fall short thereof*

He says: *But observe* the tongue of *the balance* justly, *nor fall short thereof*. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Do not decrease the balance after you have weighed something for the people, such that you wrong them.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān—Abū'l-ʿAwwām—Qatāda said, concerning *And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the measure, that you exceed not the measure, but observe the balance strictly, nor fall short thereof*: Ibn Abbās said, "O clients of the Arabs! You have been entrusted with two things, [the misuse] of which led your predecessors to perdition: a man must be conscious of God when he uses his measure, and he must be conscious of God when he uses his scales. He must use them justly, even for a tiny quantity, for this will not diminish [his own wealth]; rather, God will increase [his wealth], if He wills."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *But observe the balance strictly, wa-lā tukhsirū thereof*, "Its decrease or loss (*naqṣuhu*); when one decreases it, one short-changes it. Its *takhassur* is its decrease."

Q. 55:9-10

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:10] *And the earth He has appointed for the creatures,* [55:11] *Wherein are fruit and sheathed palm trees,* [55:12] *Husked grain and sustenance.*[1]

By His statement, *And the earth He has appointed for the anām*, God (Exalted is His remembrance) means: We have levelled it for the creatures, who are the *anām*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *for the anām*, "For the creatures".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And the earth He*

1 This is Tabarī's interpretation of the meaning of *rayḥān*, as will be seen below. Pickthall translates it as "scented herb"; Arberry has "fragrant herbs"; Asad offers "sweet-smelling plants", and Abdel Haleem has "fragrant plants".

has appointed for the creatures, "Everything that has a spirit (*rūḥ*)."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *And the earth He has appointed for the anām*, "For the creatures—the jinn and humans."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *for the anām*, "For the creatures".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *for the anām*, "For the creatures".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And the earth He has appointed for the anām*, "*The anām* are the creatures."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-Ijlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the earth He has appointed for the anām*, "For the creatures".

Q. 55:11

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda.

INTERPRETATION OF *Wherein are fruit and sheathed palm trees*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "On the earth *are fruit*". The pronoun suffix *hā* in *Wherein* (*fihā*) refers back to "the earth". *And palm trees dhātu'l-akmām. Akmām* (*sheathed*) is the plural of *kimm*, which means "that which is wrapped (*takammamat*) in the [palm tree]."

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of that.

OPINION: Some of them said: What is meant by that is: The date palm is wrapped in fibres (*lif*).

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *And sheathed palm trees*, "A thin covering (*sabība*)[1] of fibres, in which they are sheathed."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda and al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] both said, concerning *sheathed*, "The *akmām* of the palm-tree are its fibres."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *and palm trees dhātu'l-akmām*, "The fibres that are on them."

1 Following the reading and gloss in the Dār Hajar edition of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:181 (note 1).

OPINION: Others said: *Akmām* means "thrashed straw (*ruftāt*)".

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-Ijlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *and sheathed palm trees*, "Its *akmām* are thrashed straw."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of these words is: The palm tree possessing a spathe (*ṭalʿ*)[1] that is wrapped in its sheathes (*akmām*).

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd was asked, concerning His statement *and sheathed palm trees*, "Does this refer to its spathe?" He replied, "Yes. It is in its sheath until it splits open. The grain [in the next verse] is also in a sheath." Then [Ibn Zayd] recited *And no fruits burst forth from their sheaths* (Q.41:47).

TABARĪ SAID: The interpretation regarding that which is most likely to be correct is to say: Truly God (Majestic is His praise) has described the palm tree as having *akmām*—it is wrapped in its fibres and its spathe is also wrapped in its sheath. God (Mighty and Majestic is He) specified neither the palm tree being wrapped in its fibres nor the spathe being wrapped in its sheath, so this statement is general because He only says, [in effect], "the palm tree has *akmām*."

Q. 55:12

The correct thing to say is that what is meant by that is that [the palm tree] has fibres, in which it is wrapped, and has spathes that are wrapped in sheaths. By doing this, one preserves the general meaning, just as God (Majestic is His praise) made it general.

INTERPRETATION OF *Husked grain* (*al-ḥabbu dhū'l-ʿaṣf*)

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: There is also *grain* on [earth], and this is the grain of wheat and barley, which has leaves.

OPINION: Straw is *ʿaṣf* ("husk"), as ʿAlqama b. ʿAbada intended:[2]

tasqī madhāniba qad mālat ʿaṣīfatuhā
hadūruhā min atiyyi'l-mā'i matmūmu

1 "A leaflike bract that encloses or subtends a flower cluster or spadix, as in the jack-in-the-pulpit and the calla"; see "spathe", *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th edition, 2000). A bract is a "leaflike or scalelike plant part, usually small, sometimes showy or brightly colored, and located just below a flower, a flower stalk, or an inflorescence".

2 This is the eleventh verse of his second poem included in the *Muʿallaqāt*; the translation is taken from Michael Sells, *Desert Tracings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 15. This verse of poetry is also cited by Abū ʿUbayda in *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:242

Spilling water into channels, as grain husks part,
From the ripening fruit, the flood slopes flowing over.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—[ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Husked grain*, "Straw".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "The *ʿaṣf* is a green leaf whose top has been cut off. It is called *ʿaṣf* when it has dried out."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, concerning *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "The *ʿaṣf* are cultivated greens."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "Its *ʿaṣf* is its straw." Q. 55:12

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*ʿAṣf* is straw."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "The grain is wheat and barley; the *ʿaṣf* is straw."

Saʿīd b. Yaḥyā al-Umawī—ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak al-Khurāsānī—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Mālik said, concerning His statement *Husked grain*, "The grain is the first thing that grows."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Husked grain and sustenance*,[1] "Sheaves of wheat".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "The *ʿaṣf* are the leaves of anything. The [parts of] the crops that have been chopped are called *ʿuṣāfa*, and all leaves can be called *ʿuṣāfa*."

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa—Yūnus b. Muḥammad—ʿAbd al-Wāḥid—Abū Rawq ʿAṭiyya b. al-Ḥārith—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "The *ʿaṣf* is straw."

[1] The ancient manuscript used by the Dār Hajar editors differs significantly from the later manuscripts and earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, the latter of which collapse this report and the following one into a single statement by Mujāhid; see 22:184–5 and the corresponding notes of the Dār Hajar edition.

Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār—Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt—Abū Kudayna—Aṭāʾ—Saʿīd—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "The *ʿaṣf* are crops (*zarʿ*)."

OPINION: Some of them said: The *ʿaṣf* is the actual grain of wheat and barley.

An account of those who said that:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *grain dhū'l-ʿaṣf*, "As for the *ʿaṣf*, it is wheat and barley."

INTERPRETATION OF *and sustenance (rayḥān)*

The interpreters disagreed over its interpretation.

OPINION: Some of them said: It is sustenance or provision (*rizq*).

An account of those who said that:

Zayd b. Akhzam al-Ṭāʾī—Āmir b. Mudrik—ʿUtba b. Yaqẓān—Ikrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Every *rayḥān* in the Qur'ān is sustenance." Q. 55:12

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *and al-rayḥān*, "Sustenance".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning *and al-rayḥān*, "Sustenance; some of [the Arabs] say *rayḥānunā* ('our sustenance or allowance')."

Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār—Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt—Abū Kudayna—Aṭāʾ—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *and al-rayḥān*, "An abundance of vegetation (*ray*)".[1]

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa—Yūnus b. Muḥammad—ʿAbd al-Wāḥid—Abū Rawq ʿAṭiyya b. al-Ḥārith—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *and al-rayḥān*, "Sustenance and food".

OPINION: Others said: It is the *rayḥān* that can be smelled.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*The rayḥān* is any *rayḥān* ('aromatic plant') that grows on the ground."

[1] Following the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, although the editors vocalize it as *riʾ* ("elevated hill"), see 22:186. For the difference between *riʾ* and *ray*, see Hava, 281.

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *and al-rayḥān*, "As for the *rayḥān*, it is any *rayḥān* that grows on the ground."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *and al-rayḥān*, "These, your *rayḥān*."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *and al-rayḥān*, "Aromatic plants whose scent is discernable."

OPINION: Others said: It is the greenness of the crop.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd **Allāh** b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *and al-rayḥān*, "The greenness of the crop."

OPINION: Others said: It is anything that grows upon a stem.

Q. 55:12

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, "*The rayḥān* is any plant that grows upon a stem."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is to say: What is meant by *rayḥān* is, "sustenance", since it is the grain from which it is eaten.[1] We only say that this is the most likely opinion to be correct because God (Majestic is His praise) informed us that the grain is husked (*dhū'l-ʿaṣf*), which, as we described, includes a new leaf or straw, when it becomes dried out. Therefore, it is better for *rayḥān* to be its new grain, if it is from the same species of plant as that which is husked.

One can also hear Arabs say, "We went out searching for God's *rayḥān* and sustenance."[2] One can say *subḥānaka wa-rayḥānaka* ("Glory to You and [grant us] Your sustenance!"), which is synonymous with *rizqaka*. There is also the verse of al-Namir b. Tawlab:

salāmu'l-ilāhi wa-rayḥānuhu
wa-jannatuhu wa-samā'un dirar

The peace of God, and His sustenance,
His Garden, and a sky pouring forth showers.[3]

1 This is nearly identical to Abū ʿUbayda's definition of *rayḥān*; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:243.

2 This quote is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:114. Al-Farrā' uses it to support his opinion that *rayḥān* means "sustenance (*rizq*)".

3 This translation is taken from Lane, "*d-r-r*". (The verse in Lane substitutes *raḥma* in place of *janna*.) This verse is also found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:243.

it has been mentioned on the authority of some of them that *ʿaṣf* is grain which has been eaten, whereas *rayḥān* refers to the part that is good and uneaten.[1]

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *wa'l-rayḥān*. Most of the Medinans and Basrans, along with some of the Meccans and Kufans, read it in the nominative case in coordination with *ḥabb* ("grain") with the meaning "On the earth there is husked grain and on it there is also *al-rayḥānu*." Most of the Kufans recited *al-rayḥāni* in the genitive case in coordination with *al-ʿaṣf*, which gives it the meaning of "the grain which is husked and *rayḥān*."[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The reading which is most likely to be correct is the second one, in the genitive case, for the reason I previously explained, namely that *rayḥān* means "sustenance". As for those who read *al-rayḥānu* in the nominative case, I think that they interpret it to mean "fragrant plants", which leads them to adopt the nominative case. The genitive case gives the meaning "On the earth there is grain possessing leaves and straw, and [grain] possessing edible sustenance (*al-rizq al-maṭ'ūm*)," and this is a superior reading, as I have already clarified.

Q. 55:13

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:13] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:14] *He created man of clay like pottery,* [55:15] *And the jinn did He create of a confusing flame of fire.*[3] [55:16] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) means by His statement, *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*, "O jinn and humans, which favours (*ayy an*) of your Lord, among all of these favours, *do you deny*?"[4] as we have been informed by:

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sahl al-Sarrāj—

1 Al-Farrā' ascribes this opinion to "some of the Arabs"; *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:114.

2 Ibn Atiyya ascribes this reading to Ḥamza, Kisā'ī and Ibn Muḥayṣin; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:225. He remarks that everyone else read *rayḥān* in the nominative case. Al-Farrā' ascribes this reading to al-Aʿmash and Ṭabarī largely follows his explanation of the difference in meaning between these two readings; *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:113.

3 Muḥammad Asad agrees with Ṭabarī's interpretation of *mārij min nār* as "a confusing flame of fire". Arberry, Pickthall and Abdel Haleem prefer "smokeless fire".

4 The verb *do you deny* (*tukadhdhibān*) is conjugated in the dual form throughout this *sūra*, so Ṭabarī is clarifying the identities of the two subjects of this verb, who are not explicitly identified in the text of the Qur'ān. Abū ʿUbayda says something similar to this sentence; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:243.

al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *Which is it, of the ālā' of your Lord, that you deny?*, "*Which is it*, of the favours *of your Lord, that you deny?*"

[Ibn Bashshār]—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*, "[I deny] none of them, O Lord!"

Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād b. Mūsā and ʿAmr b. Mālik al-Baṣrī—Yaḥyā b. Sulaym al-Ṭāʾifī—Ismāʿīl b. Umayya—Nāfiʿ—Ibn ʿUmar said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) recited Sūrat al-Raḥmān (or it was recited in his presence) and said, 'How is it that I hear the jinn reply to their Lord in a superior manner than you folks?' They said, 'O Messenger of God, what [do they say]?' He said, 'I never came across God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* without [hearing] the jinn say, "We deny not a single one of our Lord's favours!"'"[1]

Q. 55:13

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [Abd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Which is it, of the ālā' of your Lord, that you deny?*, "Which favour of God do *you deny?*"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Which is it, of the ālā' of your Lord, that you deny?*, "[God] says to the jinn and humans, '*Which is it*, of the favours of God, *that you deny?*'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash or someone else—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās would say, whenever he recited *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*, "[I deny] none of them, O Lord!"

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Which is it, of the ālā' of your Lord, that you deny?*, "The word *ālā'* means 'power (*qudra*)'. So, which of His *ālā'* do you deny? He created you in such-and-such a manner, so which of God's powers do you deny, O both mighty classes,[2] the jinn and humans?"

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *Ḥadīth* collections by Bazzār and Dāraquṭnī; and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Tārīkh*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:189.

2 The Arabic *al-thaqalān* literally means "the two heavy ones" and is understood to refer to jinn and humans. I will be using the expression "both mighty classes", in order to retain some of the semantic flavour of the Arabic expression. In the *Ḥadīth* literature, the expression "two mighty ones" refers to the Qurʾān and the Prophet Muḥammad's family, or to the Qurʾān and the Prophet's practice (*Sunna*).

QUESTION: How is it possible that the verb and pronoun in *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* are in the second person dual forms, but the first part of this passage is in the singular, namely, [*He has created*] *man* (Q.55:3)?[1]

RESPONSE: The dual form is appropriate because the verb and pronoun in His statement *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* refer back to the jinn and humans, as is made clear in the passage immediately following this verse, which is His statement *He created man of clay like pottery, and the jinn did He create of a confusing flame of fire.*

RESPONSE: It has also been said that the form of address can be put in the dual form even though the statement began in the singular form, on account of the practice of the Arabs, who do that. [Sometimes] they will address a single person by means of the dual form. For example, they say "Saddle or ride it, boy (*irḥalāhā*[2] *yā ghulām*)!" [with the verb "saddle (or ride)" in the second person dual form]. We have already mentioned similar cases to this in other places in our book.[3]

Q. 55:14

INTERPRETATION OF *He created man of clay like pottery*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: God *created man*, meaning Adam, *of ṣalṣāl*, which is dry clay that has not been fired in a kiln.[4] It is on account of his dryness that he makes a sound (*ṣalṣala*) when he is moved or is struck, *like al-fakhkhār*. His similarity to pottery is his dryness; even though man has not been baked in a kiln, he resembles baked pottery. He makes a sound just like pottery makes a sound. The *fakhkhār* ("pottery") is clay that has been baked in a fire.[5]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ubayd Allāh b. Yūsuf al-Jubayrī—Muḥammad b. Kathīr—

1 This question and both responses (in the opposite order) are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:114.

2 This is the reading in the Dār Ḥajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* (22:191), as well as one of the two verbs found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:114.

3 For multiple references to places where Ṭabarī addresses this topic, see Dār al-Ḥajar, 22:191 (note 5). The earliest occurrence is in his commentary on Q.2:20 (not included in this translation).

4 This definition is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:243.

5 This is nearly identical to the definition of *fakhkhār* found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:243. Both Pickthall and Arberry take *fakhkhār* to mean "potter", while Asad and Abdel Haleem have "pottery".

Muslim, meaning Mulā'ī—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *He created man of clay like pottery*, "He is from clay, such that when it rains, the ground stays dry [beneath him], as if he were thin earthenware."

Abū Kurayb—ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd—Bishr b. **ʿUmāra**—Abū Rawq—al-Ḍaḥḥāk—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "God created Adam from *lāzib clay* (Q.37:11), which is pure, sticky [clay], after he was *stinking mud* (Q.15:27, 28, 33). He was *stinking mud* after having been soil. So God created Adam from this [sticky clay] with His hand, and [Adam's] body underwent forty nights of being tried by misfortunes. Satan would come to him and strike him with his foot, causing Adam to make a sound (*yuṣalṣil*). This explains God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *like pottery*. He says: Like something that is hollow and not solid."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī] and Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—Muslim al-Baṭīn—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The *ṣalṣāl* is fine soil."

Q. 55:14

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *He created man of ṣalṣāl like pottery*, "Of dry clay".

Hannād—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *of ṣalṣāl like pottery*, "The *ṣalṣāl* is clay that has been mixed with sand, which is *like pottery*."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *of ṣalṣāl like pottery*, "Just like pottery is made."[1]

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *He created man of ṣalṣāl like pottery*, "The *ṣalṣāl* is dried-out soil, which makes an audible sound [when tapped], like pottery, just like God (Mighty and Majestic is He) said [in this verse]."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *of ṣalṣāl like pottery*, "Of clay that makes a sound and is dry. Then He created man from it."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His

1 The Dār Hajar editors show how later manuscripts and editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* collapsed the content of this report with that of the following one; see 22:193 (note 1).

statement *of clay like pottery*, "Adam was dry, from clay in the Garden, until he became like *ṣalṣāl*, which is pottery (*fakhkhār*). The expression *masnūn mud* (Q.15:27) means 'malodorous'."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-Awwām [al-Ijlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *He created man of ṣalṣāl like pottery*, "Of dry soil that makes a sound."

Ibn Bashshār—Abū ʿĀṣim—Shabīb b. Bishr—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *He created man of clay like pottery*, "That which is pressed and comes out from between [His] fingers."

If one derives the meaning of His statement *ṣalṣāl* from the paradigm *fa'lāl* from the expression *ṣalla'l-laḥmu*, meaning "the meat went rancid," one has a valid position.[1] This is similar to *ṣarṣara* ("to yell") deriving from the expression "The door squeaks (*ṣarra*)" and *kabkaba* ("to turn upside down") deriving from *kabba* ("to prostrate").

Q. 55:15

INTERPRETATION OF *And the jinn did He create of a confusing flame of fire*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, *And the jinn did He create of a mārij*, which is anything that is a mixture of things, such as a mix of red, yellow and green. This derives from [the Arabs'] expression *marija amru'l-qawm*, which means "The people's affair has become confused, mixed up (*ikhtalata*)." Another example is the statement of the Prophet (ṣ) to ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr, "How is it that you are among the base people, whose pacts and guarantees get violated?"[2]

This is clearly the flame of Hellfire that is tongue-shaped.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yūsuf al-Jubayrī Abū Ḥafṣ—Muḥammad b. Kathīr—Muslim—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *of a mārij of fire*, "Of the middle of [the fire] and the best part of it".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And the jinn did He create of a mārij of fire*, "He created them from a flame of fire, from the best part of the fire."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—

1 The content of this passage is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:114. Note that al-Farrāʾ defines *ṣalṣāl* as "clay in which sand is mixed in."

2 A *ḥadīth* similar to this one can be found in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-malāḥim*: *bāb* 17: *al-amr wa'l-nahy*); and Ibn Māja, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-fitan*: *bāb* 10: *al-tathabbut fi'l-fitna*).

Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *of a mārij of fire*, "The pure part of the fire".

Abū Kurayb—ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd—Bishr b. ʿUmāra—Abū Rawq—al-Ḍaḥḥāk—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The jinn who were mentioned in the Qurʾān were created from *a mārij of fire*, which is a tongue-shaped flame that appears on its edges when it blazes".

Hannād—Abūʾl-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *of a mārij of fire*,[1] "From where the fire blazes."

Ibn Bashshār—Abū Bakr al-Bakrāwī—Yaʿqūb b. Qays al-Makkī—ʿIkrima said, concerning *of a mārij of fire*, "Of the best part of the fire."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *of a mārij of fire*, "The yellow and green flame at the top of the fire when it burns."

Q. 55:15

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said the same thing as in the previous report but added "and red" [to the list of colours].

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *And the jinn did He create of a mārij of fire*, "It is an intermittent red flame."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And the jinn did He create of a mārij of fire*, "Of the best part of the fire".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *of a mārij of fire*, "Of a flame of fire".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And the jinn did He create of a mārij of fire*, "Of a flame of fire".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *of a mārij of fire*, "Of a flame of fire".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And the jinn did He create of a mārij of fire*, "The *mārij* is the flame."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abūʾl-

1 The Dār Hajar editors note that the content of this report and the following *isnād* are missing from the later manuscripts and earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:196 (note 1).

Awwām [al-Ijlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the jinn did He create of a mārij of fire*, "Of a flame of fire".

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

He says: O members of the two mighty classes (humans and jinn), which favour of *Your Lord*, among these favours, *will you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:17] *Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests.* [55:18] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:19] *He has let loose the two seas. They meet.* [55:20] *There is a barrier between them. They encroach not (one upon the other).* [55:21] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, this is the *Lord of the two Easts*, meaning the loci of sunrise in the winter and summer, and the *Lord of the two Wests*, meaning the loci of sunset in the winter and summer.[1]

Q. 55:16–

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb al-Qummī—Jaʿfar—[Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān] b. Abzā[2] said, concerning His statement *Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests*, "The sunrises and sunsets of summer. The sun travels between the two Easts over 360 days in 360 stations (*burj*), and there is a sunrise for each station. The sun never rises two days in the same station. There are also 360 stations for the sunset, and each station has its sunset. [The sun] never sets two days in the same station."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests*, "The sunrise and sunset of winter, and the sunrise and sunset of summer."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—

1 This is also the opinion of both Abū ʿUbayda and al-Farrāʾ; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:243; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:115.

2 Ibn Ḥajar notes that Ibn Abzā can refer to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abzā al-Khuzāʿī or either of his two sons, Abd Allāh and Saʿīd; *Taqrīb*, 605. In *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (2:662), Ibn Ḥajar identifies only Saʿīd as transmitting reports to someone named Jaʿfar, so I am assuming that the Ibn Abzā whom Ṭabarī is citing here is Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abzā.

Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests*, "Its sunrise in the summer and its sunrise in the winter; and its sunset in the winter and its sunset in the summer."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-ʿIjlī]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests*, "The winter sunrise and its sunset, and the summer sunrise and its sunset."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests*, "The lowest sunrise of the year and the highest sunrise of the year, as well as the lowest sunset of the year and the highest sunset of the year."

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O jinn and humans, which of the favours of Your Lord, among all of these favours that He has bestowed upon you, such as putting the sun at your disposal in these two Easts and two Wests—it moves perpetually for your convenience, worldly benefits and living—which of them *do you deny*?

Q. 55:18-19

INTERPRETATION OF *He has let loose the two seas. They meet.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, *The Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests has let loose the two seas. They meet*. His statement *maraja* means "to send (*arsala*)" or "to let loose (*khallā*)" and derives from the expression "A man let loose his horse or mule [to pasture],"[1] when he lets it loose or leaves it free [to wander], as I have been informed by:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *maraja the two seas*, "He sent [them]."

The scholars (*ahl al-ʿilm*) disagreed over the identification of *the two seas* that God (Majestic is His praise) mentioned in this verse.

OPINION: Some of them said: They are two seas, one which is in the sky and the other of which is on the earth.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—[Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān] b. Abzā said, concerning *He has let loose the two seas. They meet. There is a barrier between them. They encroach not*, "A sea in the sky and a sea on the earth."

1 Arabic: *maraja fulānun dābbatahu*. This example is found in the second person in Abū ʿUbayda: *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:243. See also, Lane, "*m-r-j*".

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Ashʿath—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, concerning His statement *He has let loose the two seas. They meet*, "A sea in the sky and a sea on the earth."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *He has let loose the two seas. They meet*, "A sea in the sky and [a sea] on the earth—they meet every year."

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is the Persian sea and the Byzantine/Roman sea.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ziyād, the *mawlā* of Muṣʿab—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *He has let loose the two seas. They meet*, "The Byzantine/Roman sea and the Persian-Yemeni sea."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *He has let loose the two seas. They meet*, "The two seas are the Persian sea and the Byzantine/Roman sea."

Q. 55:20

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *He has let loose the two seas. They meet*, "The Persian sea and the Byzantine/Roman sea."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: what is meant by this is the sea of the sky and the sea of the earth, because God says, *There comes forth from both of them the pearl and coral-stone* (Q.55:22). Given that pearls and coral-stones come forth from the seashells of the earth's sea, [and originally came] from the raindrops from the sky, it is obvious that these are the sea of the earth and the sea of the sky.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *There is a barrier between them. They encroach not* [one upon the other]

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: There is a barrier (*ḥājiz*) and distance (*buʿd*) between the two [seas], neither one corrupts or encroaches upon its counterpart. Anything that is between two things is a *barzakh* ("barrier"), according to the Arabs. Likewise, that which is between the temporal world and the Hereafter is a *barzakh*.[2]

1 There was a widespread belief among pre-modern Muslims that the "seed" of a pearl came down from the sky in a raindrop and then grew into a pearl in a seashell underwater; see below, Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.55:22.

2 These last two sentences are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:243.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—[Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān] b. Abzā said, concerning *There is a barrier between them*, "There is distance between them, *they encroach not*: one of them does not encroach upon its counterpart."[1]

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—Fiṭr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *There is a barzakh between them. They encroach not*, "There is a barrier from God between them. One of them does not encroach upon the other."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *There is a barzakh between them. They encroach not*, "A barrier".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *There is a barzakh between them. They encroach not*, "The *barzakh* is this island or peninsula (*jazīra*), this dry space [between the two seas]." Q. 55:20

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *There is a barzakh between them. They encroach not*, "The *barzakh* that is between them is the land that is between them."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-ʿIjlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *There is a barzakh between them. They encroach not*, "[God] blocked the salty [water] from the sweet [water], the sweet from the salty, the wet from the dry, and the dry from the wet. One of them does not encroach upon the other, due to the might, kindness and power of [God]."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *There is a barzakh between them. They encroach not*, "[God] prevented them from meeting by means of an earthly barrier (*barzakh*) that He put between them. The *barzakh* is the length of earth that He put between [the two seas]."

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of His statement *They encroach not* (*lā yabghiyān*).

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: One of them does not encroach upon its counterpart.

An account of those who said that:

1 The text of this report is defective in earlier editions and manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:201 (note 2).

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—[Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān] b. Abzā said, concerning *They encroach not*, "One of them does not encroach upon its counterpart."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—Fiṭr—Mujāhid.

Another nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-ʿIjlī]—Qatāda.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that the two of them do not mix together.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *They encroach not*, "They do not mix together." Q. 55:20

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that they do not encroach upon people.[1]

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *They encroach not*, "*They encroach not* upon people, and one of them does not encroach upon its counterpart. [God] blocked one of them from its counterpart by His power, kindness and majesty (Blessed and Exalted is He)."[2]

OPINION: Others said: Rather, its meaning is: They do not encroach [upon each other] such that they meet.

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *They encroach not*, "They do not encroach upon each other such that one of them meets its counterpart."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is to say: Truly God described these two seas that He mentioned in this verse as "not encroaching". He did not specify one possible meaning or another, but left the meaning of this statement general. Therefore, the

1 The Dār Hajar edition has *al-nās* instead of *al-yabs* ("dry land") in the earlier print editions; 22:203 (note 4).

2 According to Suyūṭī, this report from Qatāda has *yabs* ("dry land") instead of *al-nās* ("people"). He cites another report in which Qatāda glosses *lā yabghiyān* as *lā yatghiyān ʿalā'l-nās*, which supports the reading of *al-nās*, although it lacks the additional clauses of this report under discussion; see *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:194.

correct opinion is to keep the meaning general, just as God (Majestic is His praise) kept it general. One should say: The two of them do not encroach upon anything—not one upon its counterpart; nor do they transgress the limit God set for them both.

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O jinn and humans, which of the favours of Your Lord that He has bestowed upon you, *do you deny*? [Do you deny] His favour of letting loose the two seas, from which He has made ornaments for you to wear?

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:22] *There comes forth from both of them the pearl and coral-stone.* [55:23] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:24] *His are the ships displayed upon the sea, like mountains.* [55:25] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

Q. 55:21

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *There comes forth from* these two seas, which God let loose and between which He put a barrier, *pearl and coral-stone*.

The interpreters disagreed over the natures of *lu'lu'* ("pearl") and *marjān* ("coral-stone").

OPINION: Some of them said: The *lu'lu'* are large pearls, while the *marjān* are those that stay small, from the [two seas].

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Jābir—ʿAbd Allāh b. Nujayy—ʿAlī said, "The *lu'lu'* are large [pearls]."[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Jābir—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *the lu'lu' and coral-stone*, "The *lu'lu'* are large [pearls]."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *There comes forth from both of them the lu'lu' and marjān*, "As for the *lu'lu'*, they are the large [pearls]. As for the *marjān*, they are the small ones. Truly in both of them there is a treasury belonging to God, to which most of the Children of Adam are guided—they extract goods, benefits and decoration [from them], as well as a means of living for a time."

1 This report is absent from later manuscripts and earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:205 (note 1).

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *There comes forth from both of them the lu'lu' and marjān*, "The *lu'lu'* are the large pearls, and the *marjān* are the small ones."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *the lu'lu' and marjān*, "As for the *marjān*, they are the small pearls; and as for the *lu'lu'*, they are the large ones."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *There comes forth from both of them the lu'lu' and marjān*, "The *lu'lu'* are the large pearls, and the *marjān* are the small pearls."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, "The *marjān* are the small pearls."

Q. 55:22

ʿAmr b. Saʿīd b. Yasār al-Qurashī—Abū Qutayba—ʿAbd Allāh b. Maysara al-Ḥarrānī—a Syrian shaykh in Mecca—Kaʿb al-Aḥbār was asked about *al-marjān* and he replied, "It is coral (*bussadh*)."

Bussadh has three branches and is a type of *lu'lu'*.[1]

OPINION: Others said: The *marjān* are the large pearls, while the *lu'lu'* are the small ones.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha or Qays b. Wahb—Murra said, "The *marjān* are the large pearls."

Muḥammad b. Sinān al-Qazzāz—al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan al-Ashqar—Zuhayr—Jābir—ʿAbd Allāh b. Nujayy—ʿAlī said; and from ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The *marjān* are the large pearls."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "The *marjān* are pearls that became large."

OPINION: Others said: The *marjān* are the premium pearls (*jayyid al-lu'lu'*).

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sharīk—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha said, "I asked Murra about the *lu'lu'* and the *marjān*. He said, 'The *marjān* are the premium pearls.'"

1 Following the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:206 (notes 3–5).

OPINION: Others said: The *marjān* are stones.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—ʿAmr b. Maymūn al-Awdī—Ibn Masʿūd said, concerning *the lu'lu' and marjān*, "The *marjān* are stones."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct interpretation of *al-lu'lu'* is that it is what people recognize as the stones that are extracted from seashells. As for *marjān*, I looked closely and found that the experts in the speech of the Arabs are not in disagreement that it is the plural of *marjāna* and that it refers to small pearls (*lu'lu'*).[1] I have just mentioned the disagreements among the earliest scholars; and God knows best the correct meaning.

Some experts in the Arabic language[2] claimed that the pearl and the coral-stone both come out of [only] one of the two seas, even though the verse states *There comes forth from both of them*. This is like the expression "I ate bread and milk"[3] or the poetic verse,

Q. 55:23

wa-raʾayti zawjakā fī'l-waghā
mutaqallidan sayfan wa rumḥā

You saw your husband in war,
Hanging upon him a sword and [wielding] a spear.[4]

ṬABARĪ SAID: This verse is not like this case. Rather, as I have previously described, [the pearls] come forth from the seashells, [after initially coming down] from the sky in rain. For this reason, it is said, *There comes forth from both of them pearls*; "both of them" means "the two seas".[5]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Rāzī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Truly when the sky rains the seashells open up their mouths, and among them are pearls (*lu'lu'*)."

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Aḥmasī—Abū Yaḥyā al-Ḥimmānī—

1 Both Abū ʿUbayda and al-Farrāʾ endorse this definition; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:244; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:115.

2 This is the opinion of Abū ʿUbayda, although he does not quote the verse of poetry that Ṭabarī mentions; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:244.

3 Arabic: *akaltu khubzan wa-labanan*. In other words, one should have said, "I ate bread and drank milk," although the meaning is clear without the verb "I drank".

4 Ṭabarī cited this verse previously, in his commentary on Q.1:2; see volume 1.

5 Recall that for Ṭabarī, one of *the two seas* (Q.55:19) is in the sky.

al-Aʿmash—Abd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "When raindrops come down from the sky, seashells open up and become pearls."

Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-Ghazzī—Firyābī: Sufyān [al-Thawrī] mentioned al-Aʿmash—ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Rāzī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Truly when the sky rains the seashells open up and any raindrops that fall into them become pearls."

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Ḍirārī—Muḥammad b. Sawwār—Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Kūfī, nephew of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Iṣbahānī—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Iṣbahānī—ʿIkrima said, "Every raindrop that falls from the sky to the sea brings forth a pearl or from it ambergris (*ʿanbara*) grows."[1]

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the reading of *There comes forth from both of them*. Most of the Medinan and Basran reciters read *yukhraju* ("There is brought forth") in the passive voice, whereas most of the Kufan and some of the Meccans read *yakhruju*, with a *fatḥa* on the *yāʾ*.[2] Q. 55:24-

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both readings are well known, so the reciter will be correct reading either one of them, due to their proximity in meaning.

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, which of the favours of Your Lord, such as the favour of the beneficial things brought forth from these two seas, *do you deny*?

INTERPRETATION OF *His are the ships displayed upon the sea, like mountains*

God (Mighty and Majestic is He) says: To the Lord of the two Easts and the two Wests belong the *jawārī*, which are the ships that plane the seas.

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the correct reading of *displayed upon the sea*. The majority of Kufans read *munshiʾāt*, with a *kasra* under the

1 Immediately following this report, a later hand wrote "This is what Ṭabarī reckoned," which probably refers to the final clause, "or from it ambergris (*ʿanbara*) grows"; *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:132; Dār Hajar 22:209. This is the only place I have seen Ṭabarī referred to as "Ṭabarī" instead of his *kunyā*, Abū Jaʿfar.

2 Ibn Atiyya ascribes the passive reading (*yukhraju*) to Nāfiʿ, Abū ʿAmr and the Medinans and the active reading (*yakhruju*) to ʿĀṣim, Ibn ʿĀmir, Ḥamza, Kisāʾī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Abū Jaʿfar; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:228.

shin, meaning "visibly travelling, arriving and departing."[1] The majority of Basrans and Medinans, along with some of the Kufans, read *munsha'āt*, with a *fatha* on the *shin*, meaning "unfurled sails, by which they travel back and forth."[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in my estimation, is that both readings are well known and have sound, proximate meanings, so the reciter will be correct reading either one.

An account of those who said the same thing we have mentioned about this verse in their interpretation of it:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *the ships displayed upon the sea*, "Ships with unfurled sails are called *munsha'āt*. When their sails are not unfurled, they are not *munsha'a*."

Q. 55:25

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*His are the jawāri displayed upon the sea, like mountains*, meaning ships."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *His are the jawāri displayed upon the sea, like mountains*, "In other words, ships."

His expression *ka'l-aʿlām* means "like mountains". [God] likens ships to mountains, and the Arabs call any tall mountain an *ʿalam*.[3] For example, [one can see] the statement of Jarīr:

idhā qata'nā ʿalaman badā ʿalam

Whenever we traversed one lofty mountain, another one appeared!

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O jinn and humans, which of the favours of Your Lord, that He has bestowed upon you, such as the

1 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ḥamza and Abū Bakr; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:229. Al-Farrāʾ ascribes it to ʿĀṣim and Yaḥyā b. Waththāb; *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:115.

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ibn Kathīr, Nāfiʿ, Abū ʿAmr, Ibn ʿĀmir and Kisāʾī; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:228.

3 These two sentences are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:115. The verse of poetry by Jarīr which follows is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:244.

travelling of the tall ships on the sea, back and forth, laden with beneficial goods for you, *do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:26] Everyone that is thereon will pass away; [55:27] There remains but Your Lord's Face of Majesty and Glory. [55:28] Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny? [55:29] All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him. Every day He is involved (with His creation). [55:30] Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "O Muḥammad, all jinn and humans on the surface of the earth *will pass away* and perish, while *There remains but Your Lord's Face of Majesty and Glory*." The expression *of Majesty and Glory* describes the *Face*, which is why *dhū* is in the nominative case. It has been alleged that ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] read *dhī'l-jalāl wa'l-ikrām* [in the genitive case], in accordance with *Majesty and Glory* being adjectives and descriptors of the *Lord*.[1] Q. 55:26-9

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, which of Your Lord's favours, among these favours, *do you deny*?

INTERPRETATION OF *All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*All* of the angels, humans, jinn and other creatures *in the heavens and the earth* seek refuge in fear with [God], asking for their needs. None of them is self-sufficient without Him," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him. Every day He is involved*, "None of the creatures in the heavens or earth is self-sufficient from [God]—He bestows life and takes it away. He causes small things to grow and frees captives.[2] He is the One Who is petitioned for the righteous people's needs, the final recipient of their complaints, and helper of the best of them."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd

1 This irregular reading is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:116.

2 Following *yafukku asiran* in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:212.

al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him. Every day He is involved*, "In other words, His servants' petitions to Him concerning sustenance, death and life. *Every day He is involved* with that."

INTERPRETATION OF *Every day He is involved*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Every day He is involved* in the affairs of His creatures. He relieves the suffering of the sufferers. He elevates some people, lowers others, and is involved in many similar affairs of His creatures too.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Yūnus b. Khabbāb and al-Aʿmash—Mujāhid—ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr said, concerning *Every day He is involved*, "He responds to a petitioner, or gives to a begger, or frees a captive, or heals a sick person."

Q. 55:29

Ibn Bashshār—Abū Aḥmad—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid—ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr said, concerning His statement *Every day He is involved*, "He frees a captive, heals a sick person and responds to a petitioner."

Ismāʿīl b. Isrāʾīl al-Salāl—Ayyūb b. Suwayd—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Every day He is involved*, "His involvement includes giving to a begger, freeing a captive, responding to a petitioner and healing a sick person."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Every day He is involved*, "Every day He responds to a petitioner, removes a hardship, responds to an oppressed person and forgives a sin."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Aʿmash—Mujāhid—ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr said, concerning *Every day He is involved*, "He responds to a petioner, gives to a begger, frees a captive, accepts the repentance of a group of people and forgives."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-ʿIjlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him. Every day He is involved*, "He creates things to a state of

perfection,[1] causes things to die and brings about new things."

ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-Ghazzī—Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Firyābī—ʿAmr b. Bakr al-Saksakī—al-Ḥārith b. ʿAbda b. Rabāḥ al-Ghassānī[2]—his father, ʿAbda b. Rabāḥ—Munīb b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Azdī[3]—his father said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) recited the verse *Every day He is involved*, and we asked, 'O Messenger of God, what is this involvement?' He replied, 'He forgives sin, relieves hardship, elevates some people and denigrates others.'"[4]

Abū Kurayb—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Mūsā—Abū Ḥamza al-Thummālī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Truly God created a preserved tablet from a white pearl, both faces of which are [covered with] red rubies. His pen is light and His book is light. Its width is the width of the space between the heaven and earth. He glances at it 360 times each day and, with each glance, He creates something, or brings something to life, or causes something to die, or ennobles someone, or abases someone. He does what He wishes."

Q. 55:30

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O jinn and humans, which of Your Lord's favours that He bestows upon you, such as setting your affairs right and those affairs of which He knows better than you know, and by turning you towards what is most beneficial for you, *do you deny*?

1 The Dār Ḥajar edition has *mukhallaq* instead of *khalq*, the latter of which is found in the later manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:214 (note 5). Lane defines *mukhallaq* as signifiying "*perfect* or *complete, in make*", in his discussion of *khaliq*; Lane, "*kh-l-q*".

2 The Dār Ḥajar editors read the name of Rabāḥ as Riyāḥ, despite significant internal and external evidence in support of Rabāḥ; see 22:214 (note 7).

3 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, following Bukhārī, identifies Munīb al-Azdī as a Companion of the Prophet, but does not provide a name for his father; *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa'l-taʿdīl*, 8:392. Ibn Ḥajar merely adds that he lived in Syria; *al-Iṣāba fi tamyiz al-Ṣaḥāba* 3:495. Both he and Ibn Abī Ḥātim identify only one man known as Munīb b. ʿAbd Allāh, whose full name is Munīb b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Umāma b. Thaʿlaba al-Anṣārī al-Madanī. Munīb's grandfather, Abū Umāma b. Thaʿlaba, was a Companion of the Prophet, although there is some confusion over his name; see *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 7:288. I cannot tell which Munīb is intended in this *isnād*: Munīb al-Azdī is Syrian, like ʿAbda b. Rabāḥ; however, there is no evidence that Munīb al-Azdī's father is named ʿAbd Allāh, unlike Munīb al-Anṣārī, who is reported to have narrated from his father. However, the Syrian provenance of this *ḥadīth*, which Suyūṭī says was transmitted by Abū'l-Dardāʾ (see the next note), would favour Munīb al-Azdī as the transmitter. The editors of the Dār Ḥajar do not comment on the identity of this Munīb.

4 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is narrated from Abū'l-Dardāʾ and is also found in the Qurʾānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh and non-canonical *Ḥadīth* books by al-Ḥasan b. Sufyān, Bazzār, Ṭabarānī, Abū'l-Shaykh al-Iṣbahānī, Bayhaqī and Ibn ʿAsākir; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:197.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:31] *We shall apply Ourself to you, O you two mighty classes (humans and jinn).* [55:32] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:33] *O company of jinn and humans, if you have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them)! You will never penetrate them save with a proof.*[1] [55:34] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of His statement *We shall apply Ourself to you, O you two mighty classes*. Most of the Medinan and Basran reciters and some of the Meccans read *sanafrughu* with a *nūn*;[2] whereas most of the Kufan reciters read *sayafrughu* with a *yā'*, on the basis of the object pronoun "Him" in the nearby verse, *All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat* Him (Q.55:29).[3] He did not say, "*All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat* Us," so they are consistent [in maintaining the third person singular] for both verses.

Q. 55:31

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in my estimation, is that both readings are well attested and close in meaning, so the reciter will be correct reading either one he chooses.

As for the interpretation of this verse: This is a threat and warning from God to His servants. It is like a person who threatens and warns someone, who cannot avoid his punishment, by saying, "I shall apply myself exclusively to you,"[4] with the meaning: "I take you to task for your affair and will punish you." One says to someone who does not have any other occupation, "You applied yourself exclusively to me,"[5] and "You applied yourself exclusively to vilifying me." In other words, "You began doing it and dedicated yourself to doing it."[6] Likewise, God (Majestic is His praise) says, *We shall apply Ourself to you, O you two mighty*

1 As it will become clear in this passage, this is Ṭabarī's preferred interpretation of *bi-sulṭān* in this verse. Pickthall translates this as "(Our) sanction"; Asad has "a sanction [from God]"; and Arberry offers "an authority".

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Nāfiʿ, Ibn Kathīr, ʿĀṣim, Abū ʿAmr and Ibn ʿĀmir; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:230.

3 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Abū ʿAmr, Hamza and Kisāʾī; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:230. Ibn al-Jazarī ascribes this reading only to Hamza and Kisāʾī, so the mention of Abū ʿAmr here is probably a scribal or printing error in Ibn ʿAṭiyya's *Tafsīr*; *Nashr*, 2:285. Al-Farrāʾ ascribes it to Talḥa b. Muṣarrif and Yaḥyā b. Waththāb; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:116.

4 Arabic: *la-atafarraghunna laka* and *sa'atafarraghu laka*; Dār Ḥajar, 22:216.

5 Arabic: *qad faraghta li*. The next sentence is *qad faraghta li-shatmi*.

6 The content and examples in this paragraph up to this point are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:116.

classes, meaning: "We shall reckon your accounts.[1] We shall begin with your affair, O people and jinn, and punish the party of sinners and reward the party of obedience."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *We shall apply Ourself to you, O you two mighty classes*, "A threat from God to His servants. God does not experience any effort (*shughl*) while He applies Himself."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda recited *We shall apply Ourself to you, O you two mighty classes* and said, "God's application to His creatures has drawn near."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Juwaybir—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning *We shall apply Ourself to you, O you two mighty classes*, "[This is] a threat."

Q. 55:32–3

It is possible that the meaning of this could be interpreted as: *We shall apply to you* that which We promised you, by way of reward and punishment.

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

He says: So which of the favours of Your Lord, O members of the two mighty classes, that He has bestowed upon you—such as His reward for the obedient folks and punishment for the disobedient ones—*do you deny?*

INTERPRETATION OF *O company of jinn and humans, if you have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them)*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of His statement *if you have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth.*

OPINION: Some of them said: "The meaning of that is: *If you have power* to go beyond the boundaries of the heavens and earth and escape from Your Lord, so that He has no power over you, then go ahead and go beyond them. However, you will not be able to do this without a sanction (*sulṭān*) from Your Lord." These interpretaters said: This statement is said to the jinn and humans on Resurrection Day. They said: This passage means: *We shall apply Ourself to you, O you two mighty classes*, and then it will be said to them: *O company of jinn and humans, if you have*

1 Abū ʿUbayda also glosses *sa-nafrughu lakum* as *sa-nuḥāsibukum*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:244.

power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them).

An account of those who said that:

Mūsā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Masrūqī—Abū Usāma—Ajlaḥ said, I heard al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim say, "When Resurrection Day comes, God will command the earthly heaven to be rendered asunder upon its creatures and all of the angels in it will come down and surround the earth. All of the heavenly creatures will come down at the second [rupture], then again at the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth and the seventh. They will line up in row after row and then the Highest Angel will descend to the left side of Gehenna. When the people of the earth see this, they will split up, but they will not come to a region of the earth except that they will find seven rows of angels, and so they will return to the place from which they were initially. This is the meaning of God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *Lo! I fear for you a Day of Summoning, a day when you will turn to flee* (Q.40:32–3); and His statement, *And Your Lord shall come with angels, rank on rank, and Hell is brought near that day* (Q.89:22–3); and His statement, *O company of jinn and humans, if you have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them)! You will never penetrate them save with a proof*; and His statement, *And the heaven will split asunder, for that day it will be frail. And the angels will be on the sides thereof* (Q.69:16–17)."

Q. 55:33

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *[If you have power]* to penetrate the heavens and the earth, penetrate *(them)* in order to flee from death. However, death will reach you, and your escape efforts will avail you nothing.

An account of those who said that:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *O company of jinn and humans, if you have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them)! You will never penetrate them save with a proof*, "This means that no one can shelter them from death and that they all shall die. They cannot flee from it, there is no escape from it, and were they *to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth*, it would be by God's authority, and God would seize them with death."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *If you have power of*

knowing what is in the heavens and the earth, then acquire this knowledge.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *O company of jinn and humans, if you have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them)! You will never penetrate them save with a proof*, "*If you have power* to know what is in the heavens and earth, then acquire this knowledge, though you will not know this *save with a proof*, meaning [with] a clear sign from God (Majestic is His praise)."

OPINION: Others said: The meaning of His statement *You will never penetrate* is: You cannot escape My authority (*sulṭānī*).

An account of those who said that:

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *You will never penetrate them save with a proof*, "You cannot escape My authority."

Q. 55:33

As for the *aqṭār* (*regions*), this is the plural of *quṭr*, and it means "the edges" or "outer limits (*atrāf*)", as we have been informed by:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *if you have power to penetrate (all) aqṭār of the heavens and the earth*, "Its edges or outer limits".

Likewise, His statement *If the enemy had entered from aqṭārihā* (Q.33:14) means "from its edges or outer limits".

As for His statement *save with a sulṭān*, the interpreters disagreed over its meaning.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is "save with a clear sign", and we have already mentioned that previously.[1]

OPINION: Others said: Its meaning is: Save with a proof or evidence (*ḥujja*).

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—a man—ʿIkrima said, concerning *You will never penetrate them save with a sulṭān*, "Everything in the Qurʾān is a *sulṭān*, so it is a proof (*ḥujja*)."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid

[1] See third OPINION above.

said, concerning His statement *with a sulṭān*, "With a proof".

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Save with ownership (*milk*), and you do not have any ownership.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-Awwām [al-ʿIjlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *You will never penetrate them save with a sulṭān*, "*You will never penetrate them save with* ownership, and you do not have any ownership."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *You will never penetrate them save with a sulṭān*, "*Save with a sulṭān* from God; save with a special power (*malaka*) from Him."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *You will never penetrate them save with a sulṭān*, "Save with a special power from God."

Q. 55:34 TABARĪ SAID: The interpretation of *[save with a sulṭān]* which is most likely to be correct is for one to say: The meaning of that is: "save with a proof or clear sign" because this is the meaning of *sulṭān* in the speech of the Arabs. "Ownership (*milk*)" might also be included in this meaning, because "ownership" is a proof.

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, which of the favours of Your Lord that I have bestowed upon you—such as the act of making you all equal in your inability to do anything contrary to the commands He has willed for you—*do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:35] *There will be sent, against you both, a flame of smokeless fire and smoke,*[1] *and you will not be helped.* [55:36] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:37] *And when the heaven splits asunder and becomes rosy like oil;*[2] [55:38] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

1 This is Ṭabarī's preferred interpretation of *nuḥās*, and it is also how Asad and Abdel Haleem render it into English. Pickthall translates *nuḥās* as "flash of brass", while Arberry has "molten brass".

2 This is Ṭabarī's preferred interpretation of *dihān*, which Muḥammad Asad openly adopts in *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), 826 (note 18). Pickthall and Abdel Haleem translate it as "red hide", while Arberry has "red leather".

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes! On Resurrection Day, *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāẓ of fire*, which is its flame, when it blazes and burns fiercely, without any smoke.[1] For example, consider the verse of Ruʾba b. al-ʿAjjāj:

innā laḥum min waqʿināʾ aqyāẓā
wa-nāra ḥarbin tusʿiru'l-shuwāẓā

From our blow, an intense summer heat have they
and a fire of war that blazes a smokeless flame.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A flame of fire".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A *shuwāẓ* is a flame of fire."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A flame of fire".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A flame of fire".

Ibn Bashshār—Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A *shuwāẓ* is an intermittent (*munqaṭiʿ*) flame."[2]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A *shuwāẓ* is the intermittent green [flame] in the fire."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A *shuwāẓ* is this intermittent green flame in the fire."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning His statement *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāẓ of fire*, "A *shuwāẓ* is the intermittent green flame in the fire."

Q. 55:35

1 This definition and the following verse of *rajaz* are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:244.

2 I am grateful to Dr Samy Ayoub for his suggestion of "intermittent" for *munqaṭiʿ* throughout this passage.

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "The *shuwāz* is the flame."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāz of fire,* "In other words, from a flame of fire."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāz of fire,* "The *shuwāz* is the flame; but as for the *nuḥās*,[1] only God knows what is intended by it."

OPINION: Others said: The *shuwāz* is the smoke that comes from the flame.

An account of those who said that:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *a shuwāz of fire,* "It is the smoke that comes from the flame, rather than the smoke that comes from the firewood."

Q. 55:35

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the reading of His statement *a flame of smokeless fire.* Most of the Medinans, Kufans and Basrans (with the exception of Ibn Abī Isḥāq), read *shuwāz* with a *damma* on the *shīn*. Ibn Abī Isḥāq and ʿAbd Allāh b. Kathīr read *shiwāz*, with a *kasra* under the *shīn*.[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: These are two dialects, like a *ṣiwār* of cows or a *ṣuwār* of cows, [both of which mean a herd of cows]. I prefer the reading *shuwāz* with the *damma* because it is the more widely known dialect, and, as such, is the reading favoured by the reciters of the garrison cities.

The interpreters also disagreed over the meaning of the word *nuḥās* (*smoke*):

OPINION: Some of them said: "smoke" is meant by it.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd al-Muḥāribī—Mūsā b. ʿUmayr—Abū Ṣāliḥ—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *and nuḥās*, "*Nuḥās* is smoke."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *and nuḥās*, "The smoke of the fire."

1 As we shall see, Ṭabarī interprets this Qurʾānic word to mean "smoke".
2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya confirms this and adds ʿĪsā and Shibl to this short list of Qurʾān reciters who read *shiwāz*; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:231. Al-Farrāʾ ascribes this reading to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:117. The following sentence concerning *ṣiwār* and *ṣuwār* is also found in this passage of his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*.

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Ashʿath—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, concerning His statement *and nuḥās*, "smoke".

OPINION: Others said: In this context, what is meant by *nuḥās* is "brass (*ṣufr*)".

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *and nuḥās*, "*Nuḥās* is the brass by which they are punished."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning and *nuḥās*, "Brass that is melted and then poured over their heads."[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *and nuḥās*, "Brass that is melted and then poured over their heads."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning and *nuḥās*, "Brass that is melted above their heads."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *and nuḥās*, "He threatens the two classes with brass, just like you hear that He will punish them with it."

Q. 55:35

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-Ijlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *There will be sent, against you both, a shuwāz of fire and nuḥās*, "He frightens them with fire and *nuḥās*."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: What is meant by *nuḥās* is "smoke" because He (Majestic is His praise) mentioned that there will be sent against these two classes a *shuwāz of fire*, which is pure fire that is free from being mixed with smoke.

Since He threatened them [initially] with a fire of this description, it is best, from the perspective of language (*kalām*), for this to be followed by the threat of a punishment of a different species (*naw*ʿ) that is not outside of the same category (*jins*) of [fire], and that is smoke. The Arabs call smoke *nuḥās*, with a *damma* above the *nūn*, or *niḥās*, with a *kasra* under the *nūn*.[2] The Qurʾān reciters are all in agreement upon the reading *nuḥās*. An example of *nuḥās* with the meaning of "smoke" is the verse of poetry by al-Nābigha of Banū Jaʿda:[3]

1 This report is missing from earlier print editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:225 (note 2).
2 Abū ʿUbayda mentions the two vocalizations of *nuḥās* and both he and al-Farrāʾ cite al-Nābigha's verse of poetry; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:244–5; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:117.
3 Earlier editions and most manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* ascribed this verse to al-Nābigha of Banū Ḏhubyān; see Dār Hajar, 22:226 (note 5).

yudi'u ka-daw'i sirājī'l-sali-
ṭi lam yaj'ali'llāhu fihi nuḥāsā

It shines like the shining of the olive-oil lamp
God did not put a trace of smoke in it.

[By *nuḥās*], he means "smoke".

INTERPRETATION OF *and you will not be helped*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "O jinn and humans, *you will not be helped* against this punishment, for it is your recompense, nor can you seek any deliverance from it," as we have been informed by:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*And you will not be helped*, meaning the jinn and humans. Also, His statement *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [refers to] the jinn and humans."

Q. 55:35-7

INTERPRETATION OF *And when the heaven splits asunder and becomes rosy like oil*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: *And when the heaven splits asunder* and becomes cracked, which will be on Resurrection Day, its colour will be the colour of a rosy red work horse (*birdhawn*).[1]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār—Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt—Abū Kudayna—Qābūs—his father—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *and becomes rosy like oil*, "Like a rose-coloured horse".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And when the heaven splits asunder and becomes rosy like oil*, "Its colour changes."

ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Shabbuwayh—Shihāb b. ʿAbbād al-Kūfī—Ibrāhīm b. Ḥumayd—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning His statement *and becomes rosy like oil*, "Like the colour of a rose-coloured work horse and then, later, like *dihān*."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concern-

1 According to Lane, a *birdhawn* is "a horse of coarse make, hardy so as to endure travel upon the mountain roads and rugged ground, not of Arabian breed, mostly brought from [Asia Minor or Greece]"; Lane, "*b-r-dh-n*".

ing His statement *and becomes rosy like oil*, "The heaven will change, and its colour will become like that of a rosy beast of burden."

Bishr [b. Muʾādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *and becomes rosy like oil*, "Today, it is green, as you can see, but on Resurrection Day, it will have a different colour."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-Jilī]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And when the heaven splits asunder and becomes rosy like oil*, "Today, it is green, but on [Resurrection Day], its colour will be red."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *and becomes rosy like oil*, "Today, it is green, but [on Resurrection Day], it will be a different colour."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *and becomes rosy like oil*, "Shiny, like oil".

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of His statement *like dihān*.

Q. 55:37

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: Like oil (*duhn*), pure red and shiny.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abū Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *and becomes rosy like dihān*, "Like oil".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *and becomes rosy like dihān*, "Pure [rosy]".

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is: It becomes rosy like freshly-tanned leather (*ka'l-adīm*).[1] They said: *dihān* is in the singular, and its plurals are *adhun* and *duhun*.[2] As for those who said that *dihān* comes from *duhn* ("oil"), they claimed that *dihān* was the plural, the singular of which is *duhn*.[3]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is that *dihān* is *duhn* ("oil"), on account of its shiny colour, because that is its well-known meaning among the Arabs.

1 This opinion appears anonymously in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:117. See also Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qurʾān*, 826 (note 18).

2 According to Hava, the singular *dihān* means "red leather; slippery place; ointment; paint, varnish; dregs of oil"; Hava, 220.

3 Some of this information is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:245. The Dār Hajar edition includes significant additions to this passage; see 22:229 (note 3).

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: O jinn and humans, which power of Your Lord, among those of which He has informed you concerning what He will do with you, *do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:39] *On that day neither man nor jinn will be questioned of his sin.*
[55:40] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*
[55:41] *The sinners will be known by their marks, and will be taken by the forelocks and feet.* [55:42] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *On that day*, the angels will not ask the sinners about their sins because God has preserved them all [to hold] against them; nor will their Lord ask some of them about the sins of others.

Q. 55:38–9

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [**ʿAṭiyya b.** Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *On that day neither man nor jinn will be questioned of his sin*, "God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: 'I will not ask them about their deeds, nor will I ask some of them about [the deeds] of others.' This verse is similar to His statement, *The sinners are not questioned of their sins* (Q.28:78) and like His statement to Muḥammad (ṣ), *and you will not be asked about the companions of Hellfire* (Q.2:119)."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *neither man nor jinn will be questioned of his sin*, "God has preserved their deeds [to hold] against them."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *neither man nor jinn will be questioned of his sin*, "The angels will not ask about any sinner, [because] they will be known [as sinners] *by their marks*."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abūʾl-ʿAwwām [al-Iḍlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *On that day neither man nor jinn will be questioned of his sin*, "It was [a time of] questioning, then the people's tongues were sealed, and then their hands and feet spoke of what they had done."[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O you two mighty classes, which of Your Lord's favours that He has bestowed upon you—such as his fairness in only punishing the sinners among you—*do you deny?*

INTERPRETATION OF *The sinners will be known by their marks*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "The angels recognize the sinners *by their simā*, which are marks, by which God has marked them—black faces and blue eyes," as we have been informed by:

Q. 55:40–2

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *The sinners will be known by their marks*, "They will be known by their black faces and blue eyes."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abūʾl-ʿAwwām [al-Iḍlī]—Qatāda said, "*The sinners will be known by their marks*: blue eyes and black faces."

INTERPRETATION OF *and will be taken by the forelocks and the feet*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The Zabāniya angels[2] will take [the sinners] by their forelocks and feet, drag them to Gehenna and cast them into it.

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O jinn and men, which of Your Lord's favours that He has bestowed upon you—such as identifying for the angels the sinners from the obedient individuals, so that only the sinners are humiliated and abased—*do you deny?*

[1] This report echoes the earlier passage in Sūrat Yāʾ Sīn; see Q.36:65.
[2] These are the angels mentioned in Q.96:18 (not included in this translation).

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:43] *This is Gehenna which the sinners deny.* [55:44] *They go circling round between it and fierce, boiling water.* [55:45] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It will be said to these sinners, whom He informed (Majestic is His praise) that they will be known *by their marks* on Resurrection Day, when they are taken by the forelocks and feet: *This is Gehenna which the sinners deny.*

The verb *yuqālu* ("it will be said") is elided because it is understood from the context of this verse.[1] It has been alleged that the reading of ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] is "This is Gehenna which you two deny entering; neither shall you both live nor die in it."[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *They go circling round between it and fierce, boiling water*

Q. 55:43-4

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: These sinners in Gehenna, whom God just described, go circling between its levels and between *fierce, boiling water*. He says: And between water that has boiled and bubbled to its most extreme temperature, reaching (*anā*) its cooking point.

[One can] use the verb *anā* for anything that has attained or reached [something].[3] For example, His statement, (*Enter not the dwellings of the Prophet for a meal*) *without waiting for its proper time* (*ināhu*; Q.33:53), which means "[the proper time] reaches you" or "arrives". Likewise, al-Nābigha of Banū Dhubyān said,

wa-tukhḍab lihyatun ghadarat wa-khānat
bi-ahmara min naji'i'l-jawfi āni[4]

A beard [of one who] deceived and betrayed will be dyed
Red from the pure boiling blood!

[The word *āni*] means "reaching a limit (*mudrik*)".

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

1 This syntactic point is made by Abū ʿUbayda; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:245.
2 Arabic: *hādhihi jahannamu'llāti kuntumā bihā tukadhdhibāni tasliyāni lā tamūtāni fihā wa-lā tahyiyān*; Dār Hajar, 22:232. Ibn Masʿūd's reading is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:117. Al-Farrāʾ adds the word *tatufāni* at the end of this passage.
3 This sentence, the comparative Qurʾānic verse and al-Nābigha's verse of poetry are all found in Abū Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:245.
4 Following the vocalization of this verse in the critical edition of al-Nābigha's *Dīwān*; *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dhubyāni*, 113.

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *between it and ḥamīm ān*, "It reached its highest degree of heat (*intahā ḥarruhu*)."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *between it and ḥamīm ān*, "It boils and bubbles until it reaches its boiling point."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *between it and ḥamīm ān*, "It has reached its boiling point (*anāhu*)."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, "*Ān* is [water] that has reached its highest degree of heat."

Ibn Bashshār—Abū ʿĀṣim—Shabīb b. Bishr—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *They go circling round between it and ḥamīm ān*, "*Ān* is anything whose boiling is intense and is thoroughly cooked." Q. 55:44

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *ḥamīm ān*, "It is that which has reached its boiling point."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-Jilī]—Qatāda said, concerning *between it and ḥamīm ān*, "[Gehenna's] contents reached their boiling point from the day God created the heavens and earth."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *They go circling round between it and ḥamīm ān*, "*Boiling water* that has reached its boiling point for cooking, since [the day] God created the heavens and earth."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *ḥamīm ān*, "It has reached (*āna*) its maximum heat."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *ḥamīm ān*, "It has reached its highest degree of heat."

OPINION: Some of them said: What is meant by *ān* is "present (*ḥāḍir*)".

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *They go circling round between it and ḥamīm ān*, "*They go circling round it and* present *boiling water*. *Ān* means 'present'."

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God says: O jinn and men, which of your Lord's favours that He has bestowed upon you—such as punishing the people of disbelief and honouring the people of belief—*do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:46] *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens.* [55:47] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:48] *Multicoloured:*[1] [55:49] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: **The servants of God, who were** God-conscious, feared the standing (maqām) before **Him** [on the Day of Judgement], and obeyed Him, by executing the obligatory acts and shunning the acts of disobedience, will have two jannas, which means "two enclosed gardens (bustānayn)."[2]

Q. 55:45-6

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. Even though their expressions for clarifying this interpretation differed, their meanings are in agreement and they interpret it this way. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd **Allāh** b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "God promised the Garden (*janna*) to the believers who feared the standing before Him and executed the obligatory acts."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—**my** father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "He feared and then became God-conscious. The person who fears [God] is he who acted in obedience to God and refrained from disobeying Him."

Abū'l-Sāʾib—Ibn Idrīs—al-Aʿmash—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "This is the man who considers sinning, then remembers *the standing before His Lord*, and so abstains from it."

[1] This is Ṭabarī's preferred interpretation of *dhawātā afnān*, which Muḥammad Asad renders as "of many wondrous hues". Pickthall translates this as "of spreading branches", while Arberry has "abounding in branches" and Abdel Haleem has "with shading branches".

[2] This is also al-Farrāʾ's gloss on *jannatān*; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:118.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "The man who considers sinning, then remembers the standing in front of God, and refrains from it—he will receive *two gardens*."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "The man who considers committing an act of disobedience, then remembers God (Mighty and Majestic is He), and so forsakes it."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "*But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens* concerns someone who, when he considers committing an act of disobedience, refrains from it."

Naṣr b. ʿAlī—Isḥāq—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr'—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "This is the man who considers disobeying God (Exalted is He) and then refrains from doing so, out of fear of God."

Q. 55:46

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "He commits a sin, then remembers *the standing before his Lord*, and then forsakes it."

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Manṣūr—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, concerning this verse *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "When this person wished to sin he abstained from doing so, out of fear of God."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "Truly the believers feared this standing, so they acted out of consideration of it and drew closer to it, through intensive worship both night and day."

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-Ijlī]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "Truly to God belongs a standing, which the believers have feared."

Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ḥarashī—ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith al-Qurashī—Shuʿba b. al-Ḥajjāj—Saʿīd al-Jarīrī—Muḥammad b. Saʿd—Abū'l-Dardāʾ said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, *But for him who fears the*

[1] Following the *isnād* in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:236.

standing before his Lord there are two gardens. [Abū'l-Dardā'] said, "Even if he fornicated or stole?" The Messenger said, "Even if he fornicated or stole, in spite of the disapproval of Abū'l-Dardā'!"[1]

Zakariyyā b. Yaḥyā b. Abān al-Miṣrī—Ibn Abī Maryam—Muḥammad b. Ja'far—Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥarmala—'Aṭā' b. Yasār—Abū'l-Dardā' said, "One day the Messenger of God (ṣ) recited this verse, *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*. I said, 'O Messenger of God, even if he fornicated or stole?' He recited, *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*. I said, 'O Messenger of God, even if he fornicated or stole?' He recited (again), *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*. I said (again), 'O Messenger of God, even if he fornicated or stole?' He said, 'In spite of the disapproval of Abū'l-Dardā'!'"

'Alī b. Sahl—Mu'ammal—Ḥammād b. Salama—Thābit—Abū Bakr b. Abī Mūsā—his father. (Ḥammād said, "I only know of [this report] as being ascribed [to the Prophet].") [He said], concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "Two gardens of gold for the 'proximate folks (*muqarrabīn*)' or the 'Foremost (*sābiqīn*)' and two gardens of silver for the 'Companions of the Right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*).'"[2]

Q. 55:46

Ibn 'Abd al-A'lā—al-Mu'tamir [b. Sulaymān al-Taymī]—his father—Sayyār said, "The verse *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens* was said in the presence of Abū'l-Dardā', and someone said, 'Even if he fornicated or stole?' He replied, 'Even if he fornicated or stole.' Then he said, 'If *he fears the standing of His Lord*, he would have neither fornicated nor stolen [anything].'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Ibn al-Mubārak—Sa'īd al-Jarīrī—a man—Abū'l-Dardā' said, concerning *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "Even if he fornicated or stole?" [The Prophet] replied, "Yes, in spite of the disapproval of Abū'l-Dardā'!"

Abū Kurayb—Ibn al-Ṣalt—'Amr b. Thābit—someone whom he mentioned—Abū Wā'il—Ibn Mas'ūd said, concerning His statement

1 According to Suyūṭī, variations of Abū'l-Dardā's *ḥadīth* are also found in the *Sunan* of Nasā'ī; the *Musnads* of Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Manī', Bazzār and Abū Ya'lā; the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; and books by Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Ṭabarānī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:202. The complete version of this *ḥadīth* appears in the next narration.

2 For more on these categories of people, see Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.56, see below The Inevitable Occasion: Sūrat al-Wāqi'a.

But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens, "Even if he fornicated or stole."

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "The two gardens of the 'Foremost (*sābiqūn*).'" Then he recited from *Multicoloured* until he reached (*In beauty*) *they are like rubies and coral-stone* (Q.55:58). Then He returned to mention the "Companions of the Right," and said, *And beside them are two other gardens* (Q.55:62), and He mentioned their wonders and their contents.

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*, "This standing occurs on Resurrection Day, when the servants stand before Him." Then he recited *A Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds* (Q.83:6). [Ibn Zayd] said, "This is the standing before your Lord."

Q. 55:47–8

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, which of the favours of your Lord that He bestowed upon you—such as His act of firmly placing the righteous believers among you in [the gardens] He (Majestic is His praise) has described in these verses—*do you deny*?

INTERPRETATION OF *Multicoloured* (*dhawātā afnān*)

He says: "Multicoloured (*dhawātā alwān*)". The singular of *afnān* is *fann*, which derives from [the Arabs'] expression "So-and-so deployed various sorts and ways of speech in his discourse,"[1] if he uses multiple rhetorical devices and figures of speech.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Ṭaḥḥān—'Abd al-Salām b. Ḥarb—'Aṭā' b. al-Sā'ib—Sa'īd b. Jubayr—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *dhawātā afnān*, "[Meaning:] multicoloured".

Al-Faḍl b. Isḥāq—Abū Qutayba—'Abd Allāh b. al-Nu'mān—'Ikrima said, concerning *dhawātā afnān*, "The shade of the boughs over the garden."[2]

The poet said,

1 Arabic: *ifnanna fulān fi ḥadīthih*; see also Lane, "*f-n-n*".

2 This report seems to support the second opinion regarding the meaning of *dhawātā afnān*.

mā hāja shawqaka min hadīli ḥamāmatin
tad'ū 'alā fanani'l-ghuṣūni ḥamāmā

tad'ū abā farkhayni ṣādafa dāriyā
dhā mikhlabayni mina'l-ṣuqūri qaṭāmā

Your passion was not aroused by the dove's cooing—
on a straight, slender bough, it calls to another dove;

It calls to Abū Farkhayn, who faces one trained for the hunt,
with two talons—a sparrow hawk.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mujāhid said; concerning *dhawātā afnān*, "Multicoloured".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Sinān said, concerning ***dhawātā*** *afnān*, "Multicoloured".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *dhawātā afnān*, "Multicoloured from the fruits [in the gardens]."

Q. 55:48

OPINION: Others said: [It means] possessing branches[1].

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—a man from Basra—Mujāhid said, concerning *dhawātā afnān*, "Possessing branches."

OPINION: Others said: The meaning of that is: Possessing trees' outer branches.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement ***dhawātā*** *afnān*, "The outermost branches of its trees run alongside each other, meaning some of them incline to others, like vine-clad walls (*maʿrūshāt*). Or it was said that this verse means: [Gardens] possessing superior qualities to everything."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is the excellence and breadth of [the two gardens], compared to everything else.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray'][2]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *dhawātā afnān*, "In other words, the excellence and breadth of [the two gardens], compared to everything else."

1 This is the definition offered by Abū ʿUbayda; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:245.

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma mar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *dhawātā afnān*, "Possessing superiority over everything else."

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, which of the favours of your Lord that He bestowed upon you—such as this reward for the people who obey Him—*do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:50] *Wherein are two fountains flowing.* [55:51] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:52] *Wherein is every kind of fruit in pairs.* [55:53] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

Q. 55:49–

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: In these two gardens, there are two fountains of water that flow between them—*Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

INTERPRETATION OF *Wherein is every kind of fruit in pairs*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: There are two types of every species of fruit in these [two gardens]—*Which is it, of the favours of your Lord* that He has bestowed upon the people who obey Him, *that you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:54] *Reclining upon couches lined with silk brocade, the fruit of both gardens near at hand.* [55:55] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens*—these folks will be enjoying pleasures in them, *reclining upon couches.*

The word *reclining* (*muttaki'īn*) is in the accusative case because it is an adverbial (*ḥāl*) clause, on account of the preceding expression. The preceding words act as a predicate to "[*He*] *who fears the standing before his Lord* is in a state of pleasure and joy, revelling in the two gardens."

INTERPRETATION OF *upon couches lined with silk brocade*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The linings of these couches are made of coarse brocade.[1]

1 This is al-Farrāʾ's gloss on *istabraq*; *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:118.

The word *istabraq* is used by the Arabs to denote coarse and rough brocade.

One of the Basran experts in the Arabic language[1] would say: Chinese household furnishings (*al-matāʿ al-ṣīnī*) that are of neither brocade nor light silk (*firind*) can be called *istabraq*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿImrān b. Mūsā al-Qazzāz—ʿAbd al-Wārith b. Saʿīd—Yaḥyā b. Abī Isḥāq said, "Sālim b. ʿAbd Allāh said to me, 'What is *istabraq*?' I replied, 'Brocade that is coarse or rough.'"

Muḥammad b. Bashshār—Yaḥyā [b. Saʿīd—Saʿīd b.] Abī ʿArūba[2]—Qatāda—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *istabraq*, "Coarse brocade".

Isḥāq b. Zayd al-Khaṭṭābī—Firyābī—Sufyān **[al-Thawrī]**—Abū Isḥāq—Hubayra b. Yarīm—Ibn Masʿūd said, concerning **His** statement *upon couches lined with silk brocade*, "You have been informed about their inner linings—imagine if you had been informed of their surfaces!"

Q. 55:54

[Abū Hishām] al-Rifāʿī—Ibn al-Yamān—Sufyān **[al-Thawrī]**—Abū Isḥāq—Hubayra said, "These are the inner linings—can you imagine their surfaces?"

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Abū Dāwūd—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, "It was remarked—these inner linings are made from coarse brocade—of what [material] are their surfaces? He said: This is among the things that God said, *No soul knows what is kept hidden for them of joy* (**Q.32:17**)."[3]

One of the experts in the Arabic language[4] claimed that the interior (*baṭāna*) can mean the exterior (*ẓihāra*) and that the exterior can be the interior. That is possible because each one of them can be facets (*wajh*) of the same thing. The Arabs might say: "This is the surface (*ẓahr*) of the sky and this is the inside (*baṭn*) of the sky," on account of it being the visible part of the sky that we see.

INTERPRETATION OF *the fruit of both gardens near at hand*

He says: "The fruit of these two gardens, which has been gathered, is near to them, so that they do not weary themselves climbing up a palm tree

1 This is Abū Ubayda's opinion; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:245.
2 Following the *isnād* in the Dār Ḥajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:243.
3 For Ṭabarī's commentary on this verse, see volume 1.
4 The content of this passage is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:118. See, also, Lane, "*b-ṭ-n*" and "*ẓ-h-r*".

or fruit tree to gather their fruits. Rather, they collect their fruit while seated, without toil," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʾādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *the fruit of both gardens near at hand*, "Their fruits are near, so that neither distance nor thorns will repel their hands. It has been mentioned to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) said, 'By the One in Whose hand lies my soul! A man in the Garden will have an uninterrupted stream of fruit, to the point that each time a fruit reaches his mouth, God will substitute a superior fruit in its place [as soon as he has finished it].'"[1]

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *the fruit of both gardens near at hand*, "Neither distance nor thorns will repel his hand."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *wa-janāʾl-jannatayni dān*, "[The gardens'] fruits are near."

Q. 55:55-6

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, which of the favours of your Lord that He has bestowed upon you—Who rewards the people who obey Him with this reward and honours them with these honours—*do you deny*?

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:56] *Therein are those of modest gaze, whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them.* [55:57] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: On these *couches lined with silk brocade* are *those of modest gaze* (*qāṣirātu'l-ṭarf*)—women who restrict their gaze to their [male] partners (*azwājihinna*) and do not look at any other men.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd al-Muḥāribī—my father; and Muḥammad b. Umāra—ʿUbayd Allāh; both ʿUbayd al-Muḥāribī and ʿUbayd Allāh from Isrāʾīl[2]—Abū Yaḥyā—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Therein are*

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *mursal ḥadīth* is found only here and in the Qurʾānic commentary of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:204.
2 Following the *isnād* in the Dār Ḥajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:245 (note 3).

those of modest gaze, "[Women] who direct their gaze away from other men and only look at their partners."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Therein are those of modest gaze*, "[Women] whose gaze is restricted to their partners and who desire no one else."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *those of modest gaze*, "They only look at their partners, saying [to them], 'By the might, majesty and beauty of My Lord! How could I see anything in the Garden more beautiful than you! All praise belongs to God, Who made you my partner and made me your partner.'"

INTERPRETATION OF *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched* (*lam yatmithh*) *before them*

Q. 55:56 He says: No human or jinn, from among those men whom God (Majestic is His praise) just described as those *who fear the standing before (their) Lord*, will have touched these women.

It can be said, "No pregnancy ever has *ṭamatha* this camel." In other words, no pregnancy has touched it (*massahu*).[1]

One of the Kufan experts in the speech of the Arabs[2] said: *Ṭamth* is sexual intercourse that results in bleeding. He says: *Ṭamth* is blood, and so *ṭamathahā* is used when a man makes her bleed from sexual intercourse.

Therefore, the only intended meaning of that, in this context, is that neither human nor jinn has had sexual intercourse with these consorts prior to these [men in the Garden].

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Talḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them*, "*Neither man nor jinn* will have deflowered *them*."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ismāʿīl—a man—ʿAlī said, "*Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them* since they were created."

Al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Ṭaḥḥān—Abū Muʿāwiya al-Ḍarīr—Mughīra b. Muslim—Ikrima said, "A woman should not say 'I am *ṭāmith*,' for *ṭamth*

1 This explanation is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:245.
2 This explanation is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:119.

is intercourse.[1] God (Majestic is His praise) says *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched* (*lam yatmithhunna*) *before them*."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them*, "Nothing has touched them—neither human nor non-human."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *lam yatmithhunna*, "Nobody has touched them."

ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Āmulī—Marwān b. Muʿāwiya—ʿĀṣim said, "I said to Abū'l-ʿĀliya, 'A woman who is *ṭāmith*' and he said, 'What is *ṭāmith*?' Another man said, 'She is menstruating.' Then Abū'l-'Āliya said, 'Menstruating? Does not God (Mighty and Majestic is He) say *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them*?'"

QUESTION: Do jinn have intercourse with women?

Q. 55:56– RESPONSE: It is said *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them*. It has been related to me on the authority of Mujāhid from Muḥammad b. ʿUmāra al-Asadī—Sahl b. ʿĀmir—Yaḥyā b. Yaʿlā al-Aslamī—ʿUthmān b. al-Aswad—Mujāhid said, "When a man has intercourse with a woman without pronouncing [the name of God] (*lam yusammi*), the jinn wrap themselves around the outer opening of his urethra and have intercourse with her along with him. This is the meaning of His statement *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them*."

Some scholars would extrapolate from this verse that [some] jinn will enter the Garden.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Ḥumayd Aḥmad b. al-Mughīra al-Ḥimṣī—Abū Ḥaywa Shurayḥ b. Yazīd al-Ḥaḍramī—Arṭāh b. al-Mundhir said, "I asked Ḍamra b. Ḥabīb, 'Do the jinn receive any reward [in the Hereafter]?' He replied yes and brought forth the verse, *whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them*. 'The female humans are for the men, and the female jinn are for the male jinn.'"

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O jinn and men, which of the

1 One of the meanings of *tamatha* is "to menstruate", so it is plausible that a menstruating woman might say *innī tāmith* ("I am menstruating"). This point is stated more explicitly in the report from Abū'l-ʿĀliya, see below. See also Hava, 438.

favours of your Lord—among all of these favours that He bestowed upon the people who obey Him—*do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:58] *(In beauty) they are like rubies and coral-stone.* [55:59] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:60] *Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness?* [55:61] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It is as if these women of *modest gaze* in these two gardens are as pure and fine as strung rubies, whose string is visible from outside the stone. Likewise, one can see the marrow of their legs through their bodies. Their beauty is akin to *coral-stone* (*marjān*).[1]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that and the report that has been narrated on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ):

Q. 55:58

Muḥammad b. Hātim al-Mu'addib—ʿAbīda—Ḥumayd—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Amr b. Maymūn—Ibn Masʿūd—the Prophet (ṣ) said, "Truly the woman from the people of the Garden is such that one can see the whiteness of her legs and its marrow through seventy silk gowns. That is what God says: *they are like rubies and coral-stone.* As for *the rubies*, [the simile is that] were you to put a string through it and then examine its clarity, you would see [the string] through the stone."[2]

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—ʿAmr b. Maymūn—Ibn Masʿūd said, "Truly the woman from among the women of the Garden wears seventy silk gowns and one can see the whiteness of her leg and its beautiful contours from outside them. That is because God says *they are like rubies and coral-stone.* Is not ruby a stone? Were you to put a thread through it and then examine its clarity, you would see the thread through the stone."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]

1 Following the Dār Hajar edition, which does not mention *rubies* here; 22:249. Recall that above in Q.55:22, Ṭabarī records disagreement as to the meaning of *marjān* and appears to endorse the definition "small pearls". Most English-language translators use the expression "coral" or "coral-stone".

2 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found also in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān, the *Musannaf* of Ibn Abī Shayba, the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh, and books by Hannād al-Sarī, Ibn Abī Dunyā and Abū'l-Shaykh al-Iṣbahānī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:206.

said, concerning His statement *they are like rubies and coral-stone*, "The clarity of the ruby is in the whiteness of the coral-stone."[1]

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Ibn Fuḍayl—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—ʿAmr b. Maymūn—"ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] informed us that the woman from the people of the Garden wears seventy silk gowns and one can see the whiteness of her leg and its beautiful contours from outside them. One can even see her marrow through all of this, because God said *they are like rubies and coral-stone*. Do you not see that ruby is a stone? If you put a thread through it, you would see the thread through the stone."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Isḥāq—ʿAmr b. Maymūn said, "Truly the houri woman will be wearing seventy garments and the marrow of her leg will be visible, just as one can see red wine in a white glass."

Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd al-Muḥāribī—al-Muṭṭalib b. Ziyād—Suddī said, concerning His statement *they are like rubies and coral-stone*, "The clarity of rubies and the beauty of coral-stone."

Q. 55:58

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *they are like rubies and coral-stone*, "The clarity of rubies is in the whiteness of coral-stone." He added, "It has been mentioned to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) said, 'Whoever enters the Garden will receive two female partners [of such transluscence that] their leg marrow will be visible from outside their garments.'"[2]

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-Ijlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *they are like rubies and coral-stone*, "[God] has compared them to the clarity of rubies in the whiteness of coral-stone."

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*They are like rubies and coral-stone*, in [their likeness to] the clarity of rubies and the whiteness of pearls."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *they are like rubies and coral-stone*, "They are like rubies in their clarity and coral-stone in their whiteness. Clarity refers to the clarity of rubies; whiteness refers to the whiteness of pearls."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, "*They are like rubies and coral-stone* in [their likeness to] the clarity of rubies and the whiteness of coral-stone."

1 Following the reading of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:250 (note 2).

2 This is part of a longer *hadith* on the authority of Abū Hurayra; see Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*Kitāb bad' al-khalq: bāb 8: mā jā' fi ṣifat al-janna wa-annahā makhlūqa*); and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*Kitāb al-janna: bāb 6: awwal zumra tadkhul al-janna ʿalā ṣūrat al-qamar laylat al-Badr wa-ṣifātihim wa-azwājihim*).

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O members of the two mighty classes, which favours of your Lord that He has bestowed upon you—such as the rewards He described in these verses for the people who obey Him—*do you deny?*

INTERPRETATION OF *Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Is the reward for fearing the standing before God for the one who fears it, acts in a good manner in the temporal world, and obeys his Lord, anything other than His Lord's act of granting him goodness in the Hereafter? [This is the way it is] because God rewards him for his goodness in the temporal world in the manner He described in these verses, from *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens* (Q.55:46) through *they are like rubies and coral-stone.*

Q. 55:59-60

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that, although their expressions regarding it differ. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—**Abū'l-ʿAwwām** [al-ʿIjlī]—Qatāda said, concerning *Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness?*, "Those who did good [acts] and were rewarded with goodness."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr—ʿUbayda b. Bakkār al-Azdī—**Muḥammad** b. Jābir—Muḥammad b. al-Munkadir said, concerning God's statement (Majestic is His praise) *Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness?*, "*Is the reward* for whomever He has blessed with Islam *other than* the Garden?"

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness?*, "Do you not see that He mentioned them, their abodes, their partners and the rivers He has prepared for them? Then He said: *Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness*, when He granted them goodness in this world? The meaning of *ahsannā ilayhim* is 'We brought them into the Garden.'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sālim b. **Abī Ḥafṣa**—Abū Yaʿlā—Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya said, concerning *Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness?*, "It is a bounty (*musjala*) for the righteous and the wicked [in the temporal world]."

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

He says: O members of the two mighty classes, which of the favours of your Lord that He has bestowed upon you—such as His rewarding the righteous folks with His goodness—*do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:62] *And beneath them are two (other) gardens*— [55:63] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*— [55:64] *Dark green (with foliage).* [55:65] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:66] *Wherein are two gushing springs.* [55:67] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: There are *two gardens beneath* those *two gardens* [mentioned in Q.55:46], the nature of which God (Majestic is His praise) described: *for him who fears the standing before his Lord.*

Q. 55:61-2

Then the interpreters disagreed over the meaning of His statement *And beneath them* (*wa-min dūnihimā*), in this context.[1]

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is that they are at a lower level than the two of them.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Ṭūsī—Isḥāq b. Sulaymān—ʿAmr b. Abī Qays—Ibn Abī Laylā—al-Minhāl b. ʿAmr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *and His Throne was upon the water* (Q.11:7), "God's Throne (*ʿarsh*) is over water, then He took for Himself a Garden (*jannа*), then He made another one beneath it, then He covered it with a single pearl. He said, *And beneath them are two other gardens* (Q.55:62). This is [the garden] that no soul knows." Or [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, "These are the two gardens which *No soul knows what is kept hidden for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do* (Q.32:17). He said: It is the one that humans do not know what is in it (or in them both), and every day something precious comes to them from one (or both) of these heavenly gardens."[2]

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—Anbasa—Sālim al-Afṭas—Saʿīd b. Jubayr.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that they are inferior to the two of them in abundance (*fi'l-faḍl*).

1 The noun *dūn*, which functions as a preposition, can mean beneath, below, before, besides, near, without and against, depending on the context; see Hava, 223, and various places in Wright.
2 This identical report is also found in Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.32:17, translated above.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And beneath them are two other gardens*, "They are the two gardens for the Companions of the Right that are lower or inferior (*adnā*) than these two [previously-mentioned] gardens."

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

He says: Which of the favours of your Lord that He has bestowed upon you—such as rewarding the righteous with these two gardens, as He has described—*do you deny?*

INTERPRETATION OF *Dark green* (*mudhāmmatān*)

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: [These two gardens] are blackened, on account of the intensity of their green hue.[1]

Q. 55:63-4

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "[Meaning:] green".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "Green from copious watering. Some may say: Densely intertwined."

Mūsā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Masrūqī—Muḥammad b. Bishr—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Jāriya b. Sulaymān al-Muslī[2] said, "I heard Ibn al-Zubayr say, while explaining this verse from the pulpit, 'Do you know what is *mudhāmmatān*? It means "green from copious watering".'"

Muḥammad b. ʿUmāra al-Asadī—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Mūsā—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Ḥāritha b. Sulaymān (That is how he said it!)[3] said: Ibn al-Zubayr said, concerning *mudhāmmatān*, "Green from copious watering".

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Marwān b. Muʿāwiya—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Jāriya b. Sulaymān—Ibn al-Zubayr said, concerning

1 This wording is very close to Abū Ubayda's definition of *mudhāmmatān*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:246.
2 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition adopt the reading of this name as Jāriya instead of Ḥāritha on the basis of early external sources and the content of the three reports beginning with this one in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:255 (notes 3–6).
3 Arabic: *hakadhā qāla*. This is the internal evidence that there was uncertainity over whether this name was Jāriya or Ḥāritha in this *isnād*. Both names would look identical in a dotless manuscript.

mudhāmmatān, "[The gardens] are both green from copious watering."

Al-Faḍl b. al-Ṣabbāḥ—Ibn Fuḍayl—ʿAṭāʾ—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn Abbās said, concerning *mudhāmmatān*, "Green".

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Idrīs—his father—ʿAṭiyya said, concerning *mudhāmmatān*, "Green from copious watering".

Muḥammad b. ʿUmāra—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Mūsā—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "Green from copious watering".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb—ʿAnbasa—Sālim al-Afṭas—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *mudhāmmatān*, "The two gardens are covered by luxuriant black and green [plants], from copious watering."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—ʿAṭāʾ—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *mudhāmmatān*, "Green".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "Blackened, dark". Q. 55:64

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "Green from copious watering, tender (*nāʿimatān*)".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "Green from copious watering. When the greenness intensifies, it becomes closer to black."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "Tender".[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Sinān said, concerning *mudhāmmatān*, "Darkened from copious watering".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens* (Q.55:46), "[These are] the two gardens of the Foremost (*sābiqūn*)."[2] Then he recited until he reached *they are like rubies and coral-stone*. "Then [God] returned to the Companions of the Right and said, *And beside them are two other gardens*. Then He mentioned their excellence and what was in them both, by saying *mudhāmmatān*. [This is] the intensity of the greenness of [these two gardens], such that they nearly became black."

1 The verb *naʿima*, from which *nāʿimatān* ("tender") is derived, can also mean "to be green"; see Hava, 783.
2 See below, commentary on Q.56:10.

Muḥammad b. Sinān al-Qazzāz—al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan al-Ashqar—Abū Kudayna—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *mudhāmmatān*, "Green".

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

He says: Which of the favours of your Lord that He has bestowed upon you—such as His rewarding the righteous with these two gardens, as He has described—*do you deny?*

INTERPRETATION OF *Wherein are two gushing springs*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: There are two *naḍḍākhatān* streams of water, meaning "gushing". in these two gardens, which are below (or inferior to) the two gardens that are reserved for *him who fears the standing before his Lord*.

The interpreters disagreed over what is gushing from these springs.

Q. 55:65-6

OPINION: Some of them said: Water is gushing from them.

An account of those who said that:

Hannād b. al-Sarī—Abūʾl-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—**ʿIkrima said**, concerning His statement *Wherein are two springs naḍḍākhatān*, "Overflowing (*fayyāḍatān*)".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd **said**, concerning His statement *naddākhatān*, "Gushing water".

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—Alī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās **said**, concerning His statement *Wherein are two springs naḍḍakhatān*, "Overflowing".

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that the two of them are full.

An account of those who said that:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—**al-Ḍaḥḥāk said**, concerning His statement *two springs naḍḍākhatān*, "They are full without interruption."

OPINION: Others said: Water and fruit gush forth [from these springs].

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Yaḥyā b. Yamān—Ashʿath—Jaʿfar—**Saʿīd said**, concerning His statement *Wherein are two springs gushing*, "With water and fruit".

OPINION: Others said: [The two springs] *are gushing* with different kinds of fruit.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaʿqūb al-Qummī—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd said, concerning *Wherein are two springs gushing*, "*They are gushing* with different kinds of fruit."

OPINION: Others said: [The two springs] *are gushing* with goodness (*khayr*).

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Wherein are two springs gushing*, "They *are gushing* with goodness."

The opinion regarding that which is mostly likely to be correct is the opinion of those who said: What is meant by that is that the two springs are gushing water, because that is the common understanding of the word "springs (*ʿuyūn*)" when they are springs of water.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

Q. 55:67-

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Which of the favours of your Lord that He bestowed upon you—such as His rewarding the righteous among you with these generous rewards—*do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:68] *Wherein is fruit, date palm and pomegranate.* [55:69] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:70] *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful;* [55:71] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: There is *fruit, date-palm and pomegranate* in these two *dark green* gardens.

The interpreters disagreed over the reason for the repetition of *date palm and pomegranate* after the [general expression] *fruit* has been mentioned.[2]

OPINION: Some of them said: That is repeated because *the date palm and pomegranate* are not fruits.[3]

1 Following the Dār Hajar editors' reading of this sentence; 22:260 (notes 2–4).

2 The problem Ṭabarī is addressing here is that one could argue that this expression is stylistically defective, which in turn challenges the entire premise, laid out in Ṭabarī's Introduction, that the Qurʾān is composed in flawless Arabic by God. The content of this entire passage through the end of the RESPONSE is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:119.

3 Al-Farrāʾ mentions this opinion anonymously and personally endorses the opinion that the Arabs considered date palms and pomegranates to be fruits; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:119.

OPINION: Others said: They are both fruits and we said they are fruits because the Arabs consider them to be fruit.

QUESTION: How can *the date palm and pomegranate* be repeated when they have just been mentioned, along with all varieties of fruits?

RESPONSE: This verse is like His statement *Be guardians of your prayers, and of the middle prayer* (Q.2:238), in which God commanded them to guard all of their prayers, and then He repeated the Afternoon prayer (*ʿaṣr*) for emphasis.[1] Likewise, *the date palm and pomegranate* are repeated in order to inspire [folks to] desire [to be among] the People of the Garden. They said: This is like His statement *Have you not seen that to God prostrates whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth*, and then, a little later on, He says *and many of mankind, while there are many to whom the doom is justly due* (Q.22:17). [Notice how] God has already mentioned [mankind] in His statement *whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth*.

Q. 55:69-70

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—a man—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "The trunks and roots of the date palms of the Garden are of gold; the stumps of its branches are green emeralds; its boughs are coverings for the People of the Garden; and its dates are bucket-sized—whiter than milk, finer than cream, sweeter than honey, and devoid of pits."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Zayd b. Aslam—Wahb [b. Munabbih] al-Dhimārī said, "We were informed that there are date palms in the Garden with gold trunks, gold branch stumps and gold branches. Their boughs are coverings for the People of the Garden, like the most beautiful ornaments ever seen by humans. Their stalks, boughs and racemes are gold. Its dates are the size of earthenware bottles—whiter than milk or silver, sweeter than honey or sugar, and finer than cream or butter."

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

He says: Which of your Lord's favours do you deny? Which of the favours that your Lord bestowed upon you—such as this honour by which He has honoured the righteous among you—*do you deny*?

INTERPRETATION OF *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "There are in these four gar-

1 There is great disagreement over which of the five daily prayers is the Middle prayer (*al-ṣalāt al-wusṭā*); see Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.2:238 (not included in this translation). Ṭabarī does not question al-Farrāʾ's identification of it as the Afternoon prayer (*ʿaṣr*).

dens—two of which are for *he who fears the standing before his Lord* (Q.55:46) and two of which *are beneath them* and *dark green*—*good*-natured (*khayrātu'l-ḥisān*) [maidens] with *beautiful* faces," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful*, "There are, in these gardens, *good*-natured [maidens] with *beautiful* faces."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful*, "*Good*-natured, with *beautiful* faces."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful*, "The *khayrāt ḥisān* (*good and beautiful*) are the wide-eyed houris (*al-ḥūr al-ʿīn*)" (see Q.44:54).

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān [al-ʿUqaylī]—Abūʾl-ʿAwwām [al-Jiʾi]—Qatāda said, concerning *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful*, "*Good*-natured, with *beautiful* faces."

Q. 55:71

Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Jābir—al-Qāsim b. Abī Bazza—Abū ʿUbayda—Masrūq—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful*, "There is a female partner in each pavilion."

Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Wahb—Muḥammad b. al-Faraj al-Ṣadafī al-Dimyāṭī—ʿAmr b. Hishām—Ibn Abī Karīma—Hishām b. Ḥassān—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—his mother—Umm Salama said, "I said, 'O Messenger of God, inform me of the meaning of His statement *Wherein (are found maidens), good and beautiful*.' He said, '*Good*-natured, with *beautiful* faces.'"[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God says: Which of the favours of your Lord that He bestowed upon you, among those mentioned [in this *sūra*], *do you deny*?

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:72] *Fair ones, confined to houses;*[2] [55:73] *Which is it, of the favours of*

1 According to Suyūṭī, this is part of a much longer *hadith* from Umm Salama that is also found in one of Ṭabarānī's books and the Qurʾānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:211–12.

2 As we shall see, this is Ṭabarī's preferred interpretation of *khiyām*. Pickthall, Arberry and Asad all translate *khiyām* as "pavilions".

your Lord, that you deny? [55:74] *Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them.* [55:75] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) informs [us] that these *good and beautiful* [maidens] are *ḥūr*, which means "white". The word *ḥūr* is the plural of *ḥawrā'*, and *ḥawrā'* means "white".

We have already explained the meaning of *ḥūr* with sufficient supporting evidence, such that it need not be repeated at this place.[1]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām al-Rifā'ī—Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā—Isrā'īl—Abū Yaḥyā al-Qattāt—Mujāhid said, "*Ḥūr* means 'white'."

Abū Hishām—Abū Nu'aym—Isrā'īl—Muslim—Mujāhid—Ibn 'Abbās said, "*Ḥūr* means 'white'."

Abū Hishām—Wakī'—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "*Ḥūr* are women." Q. 55:72

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Mu'ādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—Ubayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *ḥūr*, "*Ḥawrā'* means 'beautiful eyes'."

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, "The word *ḥawar* means 'black [pupils] in white [eyes]'."[2]

Ibn Humayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *ḥūr*, "The word *ḥūr* means 'white'. Their hearts, bodies[3] and eyes [are white]."

INTERPRETATION OF *confined* (*maqṣūrāt*)

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *maqṣūrāt*.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its interpretation is: They are confined to their male partners (*azwājihā*), do not desire any substitute for them, and do not direct their glances towards any other men.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām al-Rifā'ī—Ubayd Allāh—Isrā'īl—Abū Yaḥyā al-Qattāt—

1 See above, the translation of Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.44:54.

2 This report is missing from the ancient manuscript of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, although it is found in later ones; Dār Ḥajar, 22:264 (note 5).

3 The word I am translating as "bodies" here and in the reports in the following section is *anfusuhunna*, which literally means "their souls" or "their beings". Given the sexualized nature of these women, I think that the word "bodies" is appropriate here, although the implication of the Arabic word is that their entire essences are devoted to their male partners.

Mujāhid said, concerning *maqṣūrāt*, "Their glances and bodies[1] are confined to their male partners."

Abū Hishām—Wakī'—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *maqṣūrāt*, "Their glances are confined to their male partners, and they desire no other men."[2]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *maqṣūrāt in houses*, "Their bodies and eyes are confined to their male partners, and they desire no other men."

Abū Hishām—'Ubayd Allāh and Ibn al-Yamān—Abū Ja'far—al-Rabī' said, concerning *maqṣūrāt in houses*, "Their glances are confined to their male partners."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—'Amr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *maqṣūrāt*, "They confine their bodies, hearts and eyes to their male partners, and they desire no other men."

Abū Kurayb—Yaḥyā b. Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid—said, concerning *maqṣūrāt in houses*, "Their glances are confined to their male partners, and they desire no other men." Q. 55:72

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *maqṣūrāt*, "They are *confined* to their male partners, and they desire no other men."

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is that they are confined (*maḥbūsāt*) inside the curtained canopies.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Abū Ja'far—al-Rabī'—Abū'l-'Āliya said, concerning *Fair ones, maqṣūrāt in houses*, "Confined inside *the houses*."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Buzūrī—Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā—Abū Ja'far—al-Rabī'.

Abū Hishām al-Rifā'ī—Abū Nu'aym—Isrā'īl—Muslim—Mujāhid—Ibn 'Abbās said, "*Maqṣūrāt* means 'confined'."

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Abū Ma'shar al-Sindī—Muḥammad b. Ka'b said, "They are confined to the curtained canopies."

Muḥammad b. 'Amr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū 'Āṣim [al-Nabīl]—'Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abū Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both 'Īsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *maqṣūrāt*, "They do not leave *the houses* and display themselves [to other men]."

1 See the previous note.

2 This report is missing from the ancient manuscript of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, although it is found in later ones; Dār Ḥajar, 22:265 (note 1).

ʿUbayd b. Ismāʿīl al-Habbārī—ʿAththām b. ʿAlī—Ismāʿīl—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning His statement *Fair ones, maqṣūrāt in houses,* "The virgin women of the Garden."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb and Abū Hishām—ʿAththām b. ʿAlī—Ismāʿīl—Abū Ṣāliḥ.

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *maqṣūrāt,* "They are confined to *the houses* and do not leave them."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *maqṣūrāt in houses,* "They are confined and do not circulate among the paths [of the Garden]."

TABARĪ SAID: The correct interpretation regarding that, in our estimation, is to say: Truly God described them as *fair ones maqṣūrāt in houses.* The word *qasr* means "confinement (*habs*)" and God did not specify one of these two meanings of "confined" that we mentioned to the exclusion of the other one. Rather, the description of these women is general, so the correct interpretation is to read the statement in a general manner, just as God (Majestic is His praise) made it a general statement: They are *confined* to their partners *in houses,* and they desire no other men.

Q. 55:72

INTERPRETATION OF *to houses* (*fī'l-khiyām*)

The meaning of *khiyām* is "houses (*buyūt*)".[1] The Arabs call howdahs for women *khiyām,* such as in Labīd's statement,

> *shāqatka zu'nu'l-hayyi yawma tahammalū*
> *fa-takannasū qutunan taṣirru khiyāmuhā*
>
> The clanswomen departing stirred in you longing when they
> loaded up their gear
> Then climbed inside their howdah frames with squeaking tents.[2]

As for this Qurʾānic verse, what is meant by [*khiyām*] is "houses".

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn al-Muthannā—Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd—Shuʿba—ʿAbd al-Malik b. Maysara—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning

1 This definition and Labīd's verse are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān,* 2:246.
2 Translation by Suzanne Pickney Stetkevych in *The Mute Immortals Speak* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 10.

Fair ones, confined to khiyām, "Hollowed-out pearls (*al-durr al-mujawwaf*)".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa—Shahāba—Shuʿba—ʿAbd al-Malik—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—ʿAbd Allāh [Ibn Masʿūd].

Yaḥyā b. Ṭalḥa al-Yarbūʿī—Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ—Hishām—Muḥammad—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Fair ones, confined to khiyām,* "This *khayma* is a pearl that is four parasangs[1] by four parasangs with 4,000 golden door-leaves (*miṣrā*)."

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Abū Nuʿaym—Isrāʾīl—Muslim—Mujāhid—Ibn Abbās said, concerning *in khiyām,* "Houses of pearls".

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Aḥmasī—Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd—Idrīs al-Awdī—Shimr b. ʿAṭiyya—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said, "Do you know what *khiyām* means in the verse *Fair ones, confined to khiyām?* The *khiyām* are hollowed-out pearls."

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl [al-Aḥmasī]—Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd—Mis'ar—ʿAbd al-Malik b. Maysara—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ said, concerning His statement *Fair ones, confined to khiyām,* "[In] hollowed-out pearls". From this *isnād,* Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ also said, "Each *khayma* is a hollowed-out pearl, one parasang by one parasang, with 4,000 golden door-leaves."

Q. 55:72

[Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Aḥmasī]—Abū Dāwūd [al-Ṭayālisī]—Hammām—Qatāda—Ikrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The *khayma* in the Garden is a hollowed-out pearl, one parasang by one parasang, with 4,000 golden door-leaves."

Aḥmad b. al-Miqdām—Muʿtamir [b. Sulaymān al-Taymī]—my father—Qatāda—Khulayd [b. ʿAbd Allāh] al-ʿAṣarī said, "It has been mentioned to me that the *khayma* is a hollowed-out pearl with 70 door-leaves, all from pearls."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀʾisha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "The *khiyām* are hollowed-out pearls."

[Ibn Bashshār]—Yaḥyā [b. Saʿīd]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "The *khiyām* are hollowed-out pearls."

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Wakīʿ and Yaʿlā [—Sufyān al-Thawrī][2]—

1 A parasang (*farsakh*) is approximately three miles; Hava, 555.
2 The Dār Hajar and Halabī editions both have "Wakīʿ and Yaʿlā—Manṣūr", which is impossible; *Jāmiʿ al-bayān,* 27:161; Dār Hajar, 22:270. Given that Ṭabarī frequently groups together his reports that are transmitted through Sufyān al-Thawrī, I am assuming that he is the missing link.

Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *in khiyām*, "Hollowed-out pearls".[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *in khiyām*, "In *khiyām* of hollowed-out pearls."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Ḥarb b. Bashīr—ʿAmr b. Maymūn said, concerning *khiyām*, "A hollowed-out pearl".

Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Salama b. Nubayṭ—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "The *khayma* is a hollowed-out pearl."

Abū Hishām—Ibn al-Yamān—Abū Maʿshar—Muḥammad b. Kaʿb said, concerning *in khiyām*, "In curtained canopies (*ḥijāl*)".

Abū Hishām—ʿUbayd Allāh and Ibn al-Yamān—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ said, concerning *in khiyām*, "In curtained canopies".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr b. Abī Qays—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *in khiyām*, "In *khiyām* of pearls."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *in khiyām*, "The *khiyām* are pearls and silver, as it is said; and God knows best."

Q. 55:72

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Fair ones, confined to khiyām*, "It has been mentioned to us that Ibn ʿAbbās would say, 'The *khayma* is a hollowed-out pearl, one parasang by one parasang, with 4,000 golden doors.'" Qatāda said, "It has been alleged that each residence of the believers in the Garden would take a swift rider three nights and days to cross—what a remarkable honour God has prepared for them!"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said: Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The *khayma* is a hollowed-out pearl, one parasang by one parasang, with 4,000 golden doors."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Fair ones, confined to khiyām*, "Their *khiyām* in the Garden are made from pearls."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *confined to khiyām*, "The *khiyām* are hollowed-out pearls."

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Ḥaramī b. ʿUmāra—Shuʿba—ʿUmāra—Abū Mijlaz said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, concerning

1 This report and the following two reports are absent from the ancient manuscript of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; Dār Hajar, 22:270 (note 1).

God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *Fair ones, confined to khiyām*, "Hollowed-out pearls".[1]

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān], "I heard al-Ḍaḥḥāk say, 'Ibn Masʿūd would narrate that the Prophet of God (ṣ) said, "They are hollowed-out pearls,' meaning the *khiyām* in His statement, *Fair ones, confined to khiyām*."'[2]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *in khiyām*, "*Khiyām* of pearls".

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

He says: Which of the generous favours of your Lord that He bestowed upon you, by rewarding the righteous among you with these honours, *do you deny?*

INTERPRETATION OF *Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them*

Q. 55:73-5

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: No prior human or jinn has touched them sexually and deflowered them.

The Qurʾān reciters of the garrison cities read *lam yaṭmithhunna* with a *kasra* under the *mīm* in both places [in this *sūra*], but Kisāʾī read one of them with a *kasra* and the other with a *ḍamma*.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct reading is that of the Qurʾān reciters of the garrison cities, because it is an eloquent language and the one that is widely attested among the speech of the Arabs.

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God says: Which of the favours of your Lord that He bestowed upon you, among those described [in this *sūra*], *do you deny?*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[55:76] *Reclining on green cushions and plush carpets.* [55:77] *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?* [55:78] *Blessed be the Name of your Lord, Possesor of Majesty and Glory!*

1 This appears to be a *mursal* narration of Ibn Masʿūd's *ḥadīth* in the following narration.
2 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found only here and in the Qurʾānic commentary of Ibn Abī Ḥātim; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:210. Note that al-Ḍaḥḥāk lived long after Ibn Masʿūd passed away, so this *isnād* is missing at least one and possibly more narrators.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: These people, whom God (Majestic is His praise) honoured with the honours He has described in these verses, are in the two gardens that He described, rejoicing while *Reclining on green cushions* (*rafraf*) *and plush carpets*.

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of ***rafraf***.

OPINION: Some of them said: They are the meadows (*riyāḍ*) of the Garden, the singular of which is *rafrafah*.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—**Abū Bishr**—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning the verse *Reclining on green rafraf*, "[Meaning] the meadows of the Garden."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad—Abū Nūḥ—Shuʿba—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. **Jubayr.**

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning His statement *Reclining on green rafraf*, "The *rafraf* are the meadows of the Garden." Q. 55:76

OPINION: Others said: They are bed sheets (*maḥābis*):[1]

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Reclining on green rafraf*, "[Meaning:] bed sheets".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Reclining on green rafraf*, "The *rafraf* are decorational (*fudūl*) bed sheets and carpets."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *Reclining on green rafraf*, "These are carpets. The Medinans say that [*rafraf*] are carpets."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Salama b. Kuhayl al-Ḥaḍramī—a man called Ghaẓwān said, "The *green rafraf* are decorational bed sheets."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—**Hārūn** b. ʿAntara [b. Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kūfī]—his father—Ibn ʿAbbās[2] said, "[*Rafraf* are] decorational mattresses and bed sheets."

1 Fayrūzābādī offers a definition of *maḥābis* as *thawbun yutraḥu ʿalā zahr al-firāsh li'l-nawm ʿalayhi*: *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1987), 692. This definition is also cited by the Dār Hajar editors: 22:274 (note 1).

2 Following the superior *wuqūd* in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:274–5.

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ghaẓwān said, concerning His statement *green rafraf*, "Decorational bed sheets".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Reclining on green rafraf*, "The *green rafraf* are bed sheets."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "The *green rafraf* are green bed sheets."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *green rafraf*, "They are bed sheets."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Reclining on green rafraf*, "*Rafraf* are bed sheets."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, they are cushions or pillows (*marāfiq*).

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "*Rafraf* are green cushions." Q. 55:76

INTERPRETATION OF *plush carpets* (*ʿabqarī ḥisān*)

As for the *ʿabqarī*, they are thick carpets (*al-ṭanāfis al-thakhān*).[1] The singular of *ʿabqarī* is *ʿabqariyya*. It has been alleged that the Arabs call all types of carpets *ʿabqarī*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *ʿabqarī ḥisān*, "Carpets (*zarābiyy*)" (see Q.88:16).

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *ʿabqarī ḥisān*, "*ʿAbqarī* are plush carpets."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "The *ʿabqarī* are ancient carpets."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "The *ʿabqarī* are carpets."

1 The identical gloss for *ʿabqarī* is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:120. The following sentence diverges slightly from the printed edition of Abū ʿUbayda's *Majāz al-Qurʾān* (2:246), which suggests this is the definition of *rafraf*, rather than *ʿabqarī*, but I think Ṭabarī's reading of this passage is probably superior than that of the manuscripts used for the modern edition of *Majāz al-Qurʾān*.

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Marwān—Abū'l-ʿAwwām [al-ʿIjlī]—Qatāda said, "The *ʿabqari ḥisān* are carpets."[1]

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma mar—Qatāda said, "The *ʿabqarī ḥisān* are carpets."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *ʿabqari ḥisān*, "*Abqari* are carpets (*tanāfis*)."

OPINION: Others said: *ʿAbqarī* is brocade.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—[anonymous][2]—Mujāhid said, "The *ʿabqari ḥisān* are brocade."

The Qur'ān reciters in all of the garrison cities read this verse as *ʿalā rafrafin khuḍrin wa-ʿabqariyyin ḥisānin* without any *alif*s. It has been mentioned, in an inauthentic report with an unsound chain of transmitters, that the Prophet (ṣ) recited *ʿalā rafārifin khuḍrin wa-ʿabāqiriyyin* with *alif*s and with declension.[3] It has also been alleged that Zuhayr al-Qurqubī (?)[4] recited *ʿalā rafārifa khuḍrin* with an *alif* and without declension, as well as *ʿabāqiriyya ḥisānin*, with an *alif* and without declension.

Q. 55:77

The reading of *rafārifa* in this reading could be considered correct [linguistically].[5] However, there is no way in which *ʿabāqiriyya* could be correct, according to the experts in the Arabic language, because the *alif* in the plural form cannot be followed by four letters or three sound ones (*ṣiḥāḥ*). If the first [irregular] reading attributed to the Prophet (ṣ) is correct, it would be necessary to read the two words [*rafārif* and *ʿabāqirī*] without declension.

INTERPRETATION OF *Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Which of the favours of your

1 This report and the previous one are duplicated in the Halabī edition of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*; *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:164.

2 Sufyān could not have heard from Mujāhid, so either a name is missing or the *isnād* is "interrupted (*munqaṭiʿ*)".

3 Suyūṭī mentions that a report to this effect is found in the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, and that he declared it to be a "sound" *ḥadīth*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:214. It is also found in Ibn al-Anbārī's *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*.

4 The printed edition of al-Farrāʾ has "Zuhayr al-Qurqubī"; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:120. Ibn Aṭiyya has "al-Ṭrqbī" and the modern editor did not offer a vocalization of his name; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:236. Suyūṭī has the unlikely reading of "Zuhayr al-Qurashī" and identifies him as a Basran grammarian; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:214. The Dār Hajar edition of Tabarī's *Tafsīr* has "al-Furqubī", although the editors note that the ancient manuscript has "al-Qurqubī"; 22:277 (note 5).

5 The content of this explanation is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:120.

Lord that He bestowed upon you—such as His honouring the obedient folk among you with these honours—*do you deny*?

INTERPRETATION OF *Blessed be the Name of your Lord, Possessor of Majesty and Glory*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "O Muḥammad, *blessed be* the remembrance of *your Lord*, Who is *Possessor of Majesty*, which means 'possessing greatness', *and Glory*, which means, 'One Who is glorified by all of His creation,'" as I have been informed by:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *dhī'l-jalāl wa'l-ikrām*, "[Meaning the One] possessing greatness and magnificence."

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Raḥmān
(Mighty and Majestic is He)

Q. 55:78

THE INEVITABLE OCCASION
SŪRAT AL-WĀQIʿA
(Q. 56:1–96)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:1] *When the Inevitable Occasion occurs–* [56:2] *There is no denying it will occur–* [56:3] *Lowering (some), Raising (others);* [56:4] *When the earth is shaken with a shock* [56:5] *And the hills are ground to powder* [56:6] *So that they become a scattered dust,*

By His statement, *When the Inevitable Occasion occurs,* God (Exalted is He remembrance) means: "When the Resurrection Shout comes down." This occurs when the Horn (*sūr*) is blown to bring about the Last Hour, as I have been informed by:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *When the Inevitable Occasion occurs,* "In other words, the Shout (*sayha*)."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statements *the Inevitable Occasion* (*wāqiʿa*), *the Overwhelming Event* (*tāmma*; Q.79:34), *the Piercing Call* (*ṣākhkha*; Q.80:33), and similar [expressions], "These are among the names of Resurrection Day, which God has magnified and of which He has warned His servants."

INTERPRETATION OF *There is no denying it will occur*

God (Exalted is He) says: There is no denial or reversion of the coming occurrence of *the Inevitable Occasion*, or exception to it.

The word *kādhiba* in this context is a verbal noun, like the cases of *ʿāqiba* ("consequence, outcome") and *ʿāfiya* ("comfort").[1]

1 This sentence is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:121.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *There is no denying it will occur,* "There is no exception, no return, and no reverting it."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *There is no denying it will occur,* "[There is no] exception."

INTERPRETATION OF *Lowering (some), raising (others)*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *The Inevitable Occurrence*, at this time, will be *lowering* into God's Hellfire those people who, in the temporal world, were mighty, and *raising* (*others*). He says: People who were weak in the temporal world will be raised up to the mercy of God and His Garden. It has also been said: [*The Inevitable Occasion*] lowers some, making itself audible to the near [people], and raises others, making itself audible to the distant [people].

Q. 56:3

An account of those who said what we said concerning that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—ʿUbayd Allāh, meaning al-ʿAtakī—ʿUthmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Surāqa said, concerning His statement *Lowering (some), raising (others)*, "The Last Hour will lower the enemies of God into Hellfire and raise the Friends of God into the Garden."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lowering (some), raising (others)*, "It will raise[1] every plain and mountain, so that [*the Inevitable Occasion*] will make itself audible to the near and distant [people]. Then it will raise some people to God's honour, and lower other people into God's punishment."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Lowering (some), raising (others)*, "[*The Inevitable Occasion*] will make itself audible to the near and distant, *lowering* some people into God's punishment, and *raising* some people up to God's honour."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Yazīd—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *Lowering (some), raising (others)*, "[*The Inevitable Occasion*] lowers some, making itself audible to the near [people], and

1 Following the proposed reading by the Dār Hajar editors of *ʿalat*, although it is not found in any of the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:281 (note 1). The feminine subject of this verb is presumably *the Inevitable Occasion* (*al-wāqiʿa*).

raises others, making itself audible to the distant [people]. The near and far will be equal before God."

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *Lowering (some), raising (others)*, "[*The Inevitable Occasion*] will make itself audible to the near and distant."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Mu'ādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—'Ubayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Lowering (some), raising (others)*, "[*The Inevitable Occasion*] lowers some, making itself audible to the near [people], and raises others, making itself audible to the distant [people]. The near and far will be equal with respect to [*the Inevitable Occasion*]."

INTERPRETATION OF *When the earth is shaken with a shock*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: When the earth quakes and is moved violently.

Q. 56:4-5

[The verb *rajja*] derives from the Arabs' expression "The arrow *yartajju* in the target,"[1] meaning "it shakes and quivers".

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

'Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ ['Abd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Mu'āwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—Alī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *When the earth is shaken with a shock*, "[Meaning] its quaking".

Muḥammad b. 'Amr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū 'Āṣim [al-Nabīl]—'Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both 'Īsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *When the earth rujjat with a shock*, "[When it] quakes."

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *When the earth is shaken with a shock*, "When it is struck by an earthquake."

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—Qatāda said, concerning *When the earth is shaken with a shock*, "When it quakes like an earthquake."

INTERPRETATION OF *And the hills are ground to powder*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The mountains are crushed, so

1 This explanation is found in Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:247.

they become like a dish of oil and flour, which is moist, just as He (Majestic is His praise) said *And the mountains will be as a heap of sand poured and flowing* (Q 73:14). The Arabs use *basīsa* to mean flour or barley gruel (*sawīq*) that is stirred and used as a provision.[1]

It has been alleged that a thief from the tribe of Ghaṭafān wanted to bake some bread, but feared that the baking process would delay him, so he just moistened it and ate the flour as paste, saying,[2]

lā takhbizā khubzan wa-bussā bassā
malsan bi-dhawdi'l-halasiyyi malsā

Don't bake bread—rather, crush powdered flour!
Come quickly with the camels of al-Ḥalasī! Come quickly!

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

'Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ ['Abd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Mu'āwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—'Alī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *bussat the hills bassan*, "They are crushed (*futtitat fattan*)."

Q. 56:5

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *bussat the hills bassan*, "They are crushed."

Ibn Bashshār—'Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *bussat the hills bassan*, "Like how barley gruel is crushed."

Aḥmad b. 'Amr al-Baṣrī—Ḥafṣ b. 'Umar al-'Adanī—al-Ḥakam b. Abān—'Ikrima said, concerning *bussat the hills bassan*, "They are crushed."

Ismā'īl b. Mūsā b. Bint al-Suddī—Bishr b. al-Ḥakam al-Aḥmasī—Sa'īd b. Salt—Ismā'īl al-Suddī[3]—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning *bussat the hills bassan*, "They are crushed."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *bussat the hills bassan*, "Like how [barley] is ground to make gruel (*sawīq*)."

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's

1 The content of this sentence is found with a slightly different wording in al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:122.

2 This anecdote and initial hemistich are found in Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:248; both hemistiches without the anecdote about the thief are found in al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:121.

3 Following the *isnād* in the earlier printed editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:284 (note 1) of the Dār Hajar edition.

statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *bussat the hills bassan*, "They will become *as a heap of sand poured and flowing* (Q.73:14), just as God (Mighty and Majestic is He) said."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *bussat the hills bassan*, "They are crushed."

INTERPRETATION OF *So that they become a scattered dust*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *So that* the hills *became dust.*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *habā'* (dust).

OPINION: Some of them said: It is the beams of sunlight that enter a small window in the form of dust particles.[1]

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *So that they become scattered habā'*, "Beams of sunlight".

Q. 56:5-6

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—ʿAṭā'—Saʿīd [b. Jubayr] said, concerning *So that they become scattered habā'*, "Beams of sunlight, when they pass through a small window."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *So that they become scattered habā'*, "Beams of sunlight, when they pass through a small window, but really are nothing."

OPINION: Others said: It is the dust raised by beasts.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Isḥāq—al-Ḥārith—ʿAlī said, concerning *scattered habā'*, "Dust raised by beasts."

OPINION: Others said: It is the shooting sparks from a fire that are devoid of any substance.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *So that they become a scattered habā'*, "The *habā'* are the sparks that fly upward from a blazing fire. Sparks fly up from it, and when they fall, they have no impact (*lam yakun shay'an*)."

OPINION: Others said: It is the withered, desiccated tree that is scattered by the winds.

[1] This is the definition offered by Abū ʿUbayda; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:248.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *So that they become a scattered habā'*, "Like a desiccated tree, whose remains are scattered north and south by the wind."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *scattered habā'an*, "The *habā'* are the tiny pieces of a desiccated tree that the winds scatter."

ṬABARĪ SAID: We have already explained sufficiently the meaning of *habā'*, along with its supporting evidence, in another place, such that there is no need to repeat this information at this juncture.[1]

As for His statement *munbaththa*, it means "dispersed" or "scattered (*mutafarriqan*)".[2]

Q. 56:7-8

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:7] *And you will be three kinds:* [56:8] *(First) the Companions of the Right Hand—O Companions of the Right Hand!* [56:9] *And (then) the Companions of the Left Hand—O Companions of the Left Hand!* [56:10] *And the Foremost, the Foremost:* [56:11] *Those are they who will be brought nigh* [56:12] *In gardens of delight*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "O humanity, you will be in three categories or types," as we have been informed by:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And you will be three azwāj*, "The stations (*manāzil*) of the people on Resurrection Day."

INTERPRETATION OF (*First*) *the Companions of the Right Hand—O Companions of the Right Hand!*

This is a clear exposition from God of the *three kinds* [of people]. He (Mighty and Majestic is He) says: *And you will be three kinds: the Companions of the Right Hand; the Companions of the Left Hand*; and *the Foremost*. He made the declarative statement so clear that further clarification [of these groups] is unnecessary, in the way we mentioned, on account of the mean-

[1] This information is found in Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.25:23 (not included in this translation).
[2] Abū ʿUbayda also glosses *munbaththa* as *mutafarriq*; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:248.

ings indicated by these words. He said: (*First*) *the Companions of the Right Hand—O Companions of the Right Hand!* He causes His Prophet to marvel at them, saying: "The Companions of the Right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) are the people taken on the right to the Garden; how great are the Companions of the Right!"[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *And (then) the Companions of the Left Hand—O Companions of the Left Hand!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "The Companions of the Left (*aṣḥāb al-shimāl*) are taken on the left to Hellfire." The Arabs call the left hand *al-shu'mā*, as can be seen in the verse by the poet A'shā of Banū Tha'laba:

fa-anhā 'alā shu'mā yadayhi fa-dhādahā
bi-azma'a min far'i-l-dhu'ābati ashamā

Q. 56:9-10

[The bull] bore down upon his left hoof and repulsed [the hunting dogs]
With a withered brown [horn] from the darkest black forelock.

INTERPRETATION OF *And the Foremost, the Foremost* (*sābiqūn*)

This is the third kind of people, who were the first to believe in God and His Messenger. They are the earliest Emigrants.[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Humayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—'Ubayd Allāh, meaning al-'Atakī—'Uthmān b. 'Abd Allāh b. Surāqa said, concerning His statement *And you will be three kinds*, "Two will be in the Garden and one in Hellfire. The *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes* (Q.56:22) are for the Foremost and the *lovers, all of the same age* (Q.56:37) are for *the Companions of the Right*."

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—Qatāda said, concerning *And you will be three kinds*, "The stations of the people on Resurrection Day."[3]

Ibn Bashshār—Hawdha—'Awf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said—concerning His statement *And you will be three kinds: (First) the Companions*

1 The content of this final sentence is found in al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:122.
2 The Emigrants (*muhājirūn*) are the earliest followers of Muhammad during the Meccan period from approximately 610–22 CE. Many of the most famous Companions of the Prophet, such as the first four caliphs, were among the Emigrants.
3 This identical report was repeated previously in the commentary on Q.56:7.

of the Right Hand—O Companions of the Right Hand! [56:9] *And (then) the Companions of the Left Hand—O Companions of the Left Hand!* [56:10] *And the Foremost, the Foremost* until *A multitude of those of old, and a few of those of later time* (Q.56:13–14)—the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "God has made equal the Companions of the Right of the earlier communities with the Companions of the Right in this [Muslim] community. *The Foremost* individuals (*sābiqūn*) of the earlier communities were more numerous than the foremost individuals in this [Muslim] community."[1]

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *the Companions of the Right Hand—O Companions of the Right Hand!*, "In other words, what they will have and what will be prepared for them!" *And (then) the Companions of the Left Hand—O Companions of the Left Hand!*—"What they will have and what will be prepared for them!" *And the Foremost, the Foremost*—"In other words, [the foremost individuals] of each community."

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said,

Q. 56:10

> I have found that passions (*hawā*) are of three varieties. [First], there is the man who takes his passions for his knowledge, so that his passions prevail over and dominate his knowledge to the point that this mixture of knowledge and passion is base and weak. When knowledge is weak, passion is overwhelming and dominant. The person who has put passion and knowledge in his heart is among the partners of Hellfire (*azwāj al-nār*). [Second], if the person is someone for whom God wishes goodness, he gains awareness and pays attention, (for this is a form of aiding his knowledge over his passion), to the point that God makes knowledge prevail over his passions. If the state of a believer becomes good and his path becomes straight, then his passions will be weak, and his knowledge will be overpowering and dominant. If he is someone for whom God wishes goodness, He marks (*khatama*) his deeds with the prevalence of knowledge. God will take his life when He takes it, at which time his knowledge will be dominant and he will be acting in accordance with it; and his passions will be weak and base, whereby he will have

1 Suyūṭī mentions that this report is also found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of 'Abd b. Humayd and Ibn al-Mundhir, although he ascribes it to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī rather than the Prophet; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:217.

no interest in them nor act in accordance with them. As for the third type, God makes his passions repulsive to him by means of his knowledge, such that he has no desire for his passions to overpower his knowledge, or even for them to be half or a smaller portion of his knowledge.[1] This is the third type and he is the best of all of them. He is the person about whom God (Majestic is His praise) said in Sūrat al-Wāqi'a, *And you will be three kinds*. [Ibn Zayd] said: Two kinds will be in the Garden, and one will be in Hellfire. The Foremost are those whose knowledge overpowers their passions, and the other kind is the one whom God has marked by making his knowledge prevail over his passions. Both of these kinds are in the Garden. The final [kind] is he whose passions dominate his knowledge, and this is the kind [destined for] Hellfire.

Q. 56:10

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over why *the Companions of the Right Hand* and *the Companions of the Left Hand* are in the nominative case. One of the Basran grammarians[2] said: [These clauses] are predicates of His statements: *the Companions of the Right Hand—mā aṣḥābu'l-maymana*; and *And (then) the Companions of the Left Hand—mā aṣḥābu'l-mash'ama*. If one says, *Zaydun, mā Zaydun*, the intended meaning is "Zayd is strong (*Zaydun shadīd*)."

Someone else[3] said: The sentence *O Companions of the Right Hand* is not its predicate, but rather refers back to the initial occurrence of these words and is an expression of wonder (*ta'ajjub*). It is as if He said: "Companions of the Right Hand—how wondrous are they (*mā hum*)!" just like "*the Clamour* (*al-qāri'a*)—how amazing is it (*mā hiya*)!" or "*the Inevitable Hour* (*al-ḥāqqa*)—how amazing is it!"[4] The second clause refers back to the first clause and so expresses wonder. In this case, the expression of wonder takes the meaning of a declarative sentence (*khabar*). Were the sentence interrogative, it would not be possible grammatically for it to be the predicate of this subject, because the interrogative [clause] cannot be a predicate.[5] Likewise, the predicate (or declarative sentence) cannot be an interrogative sentence.

1 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:289 (note 1).
2 This is the opinion of al-Akhfash; see his *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:701.
3 This is al-Farrā''s opinion, although he does not cite these parallel verses; *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:122.
4 See Q.101:1–2 and Q.69:1–2, respectively.
5 In other words, its meaning cannot be: "Who are the Companions of the Right Hand?" Interestingly, Pickthall translates these clauses as interrogative clauses, while Arberry and Asad translate them as exclamatory sentences or clauses.

However, the form of wonder can be a declarative statement, and it can be the predicate of a subject clause. The sentence *Zayd wa-mā Zayd* must be two sentences (*kalāmayn*) because the *wāw* cannot be included in the predicate of the subject. The only possible meaning is "This is Zayd—how strong he is!" or "This is Zayd—how knowledgeable is he!"[1]

The interpreters disagreed over the meanings of His statement *And the Foremost, the Foremost*.

OPINION: Some of them said: They are the Muslims who prayed in the direction of both Jerusalem and Mecca (*qiblatayn*).

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Khārija—Qurra—Ibn Sīrīn said, concerning *And the Foremost, the Foremost*, "Those who prayed in the directions of both [Jerusalem and Mecca]."

OPINION: Others said, concerning that, what has been narrated to me by:

'Abd al-Karīm b. Abī 'Umayr—al-Walīd b. Muslim—Abū 'Amr—'Uthmān b. Abī Sawda, who said, concerning *And the Foremost, the foremost*, "The first of them to arrive at the mosque, and the most rapid of them to go forward in the path of God." Q. 56:10-1

TABARĪ SAID:[2] There are two explanations as to why *the Foremost* is in the nominative case. First, the initial *sābiqūn* is in the nominative case on account of the second [*sābiqūn*], in which case the meaning is "*The Foremost*, the first ones," just as it is said *al-sābiqu'l-awwalu*. The second explanation is that *the Foremost* is in the nominative case because of His statement *ulā'ika'l-muqarrabūn* (*Those are they who will be brought nigh*).[3] His second statement of *the Foremost* [is in the nominative case] because it corroborates and intensifies the initial statement [of *the Foremost*].[4]

INTERPRETATION OF *Those are they who will be brought nigh*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: *Those are they* whom God brings close to Himself on Resurrection Day when He places them in the Garden.

1 It is unclear to me why Tabarī cites this latter position at this juncture because the passage in question in Sūrat al-Wāqi'a does not have a *wāw* between the two clauses. Rather, the Arabic reads: *fa-aṣḥābu'l-maymana mā aṣḥābu'l-maymana*.
2 These are actually the explanations offered by al-Farrā' in his *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:122.
3 See the Dār Hajar edition of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*, which fills in an important lacuna in the earlier editions of this text; 22:290 (note 6).
4 In other words, the second *al-sābiqūn* is in the nominative case because it serves as corroboration [*tawkīd*] of the initial *al-sābiqūn*, and, according to Arabic grammar, words that serve as corroboration will agree in case with the word they are emphasizing or intensifying; see Wright, 2:282.

INTERPRETATION OF *In gardens of delight*

He says: [They will be] in eternal gardens of delight.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:13] A multitude of those of old [56:14] And a few of those of later time. [56:15] On lined couches, [56:16] Reclining therein face-to-face. [56:17] Immortal youths going round about them [56:18] With goblets and ewers and a cup from a pure spring [56:19] From which they get no aching of the head nor any madness, [56:20] And fruit that they prefer [56:21] And flesh of fowls that they desire.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: A group from the past communities (or nations; *umam*) and a small number from Muḥammad's (ṣ) community, who are *those of later time*, [will be among *the Foremost*]. They are called *those of later time* (*ākhirūn*) because they are from the final community.

Q. 56:12–15

INTERPRETATION OF *On lined* (*mawḍūna*) *couches*

He says: [They are] on woven couches, parts of which are interlaced with other parts, just as a coat of mail is pleated ring by ring, increasing in thickness.[1]

For example, al-Aʿshā said,

wa-min nasji Dāwūda mawḍūnatan
tusāqu maʿa-l-hayyiʿīrani fa-ʿīrā

And pleated mail of [Prophet] David
was carried with the clan, caravan after caravan.

A related word is the *wadin* of a she-camel, which is straps of leather that are pleated one over the other, like the rings of chain mail. It has been alleged that *wadin* has the same meaning as *mawḍūn*, since the *mafʿūl* nominal form has been converted to the *faʿil* form, like *qatil* ("a killed person") is identical to *maqtūl*.[2]

It has been reported from [al-Farrāʾ] who heard some Arabs say: When the baked bricks are interlaced (*mawḍūn*), some over others, [the word *mawḍūn*] means "made fast and strong (*musharraj safīf*)".[3]

1 This explanation and the verse of poetry which follows are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:248.

2 This paragraph up to here is also found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:248.

3 The text in the Halabi edition (27:172) of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* is very corrupt compared to the original passage in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:122. See also Lane, "*sh-r-f*". The Dār Hajar passage is correct; 22:291.

It has also been said that these couches are called *mawḍūna* because they are encrusted with gold and jewels.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Muʾammal—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ḥuṣayn—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *On mawḍūna couches*, "Finely woven with gold".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ḥuṣayn—Mujāhid said, concerning *On mawḍūna couches*, "Finely woven with gold".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *on mawḍūna couches*, "In other words, finely woven couches."

Hannād—Abūʾl-Aḥwaṣ—Ḥuṣayn—Mujāhid said, "*Mawḍūna* is something finely woven with gold."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqid—Yazīd—Ikrima said, concerning His statement *On mawḍūna couches*, "Encrusted with pearls and rubies".

Q. 56:13–1

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *mawḍūna*, "Finely woven with gold".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *on mawḍūna couches*, "The word *mawḍūna* means woven, and it is the softest type of couch."

Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *mawḍūna*, "Finely woven".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *on mawḍūna couches*, "Finely woven, encrusted [with jewels]".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *on mawḍūna couches*, "The word *waḍn* 'means to encrust and interweave'. He says: The middle of these couches is encrusted and interlaced."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *on mawḍūna couches*, "The word *mawḍūna* means 'finely woven with leather', which is *waḍin*, meaning 'interwoven'."

Others said: Rather, its meaning is that they are in rows.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *On mawḍūna couches*, "In rows".

INTERPRETATION OF *Reclining therein face-to-face*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "They are *reclining on lined couches* all facing one another. None of them is looking at the backsides of anyone else," as we have been informed by:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Reclining therein face-to-face*, "Not one of them will look at the backside of anyone else."

It has been alleged that Ibn Masʿūd's reading of this verse was "Reclining on them in bliss", as I have been informed by:

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Abū Ishāq said, "The reading of this verse by ʿAbd Allāh, meaning Ibn Masʿūd, Q. 56:16-17 was *muttaki'ina ʿalayhā nā*ʿimīn."

ṬABARĪ SAID: We have already explained the meaning of this elsewhere and mentioned all of the relevant transmitted reports.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *Immortal youths going round about them*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Immortal youths going round about* these foremost individuals, whom God has drawn near *in gardens of delight*.[2]

Then the interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of His statement *immortal* (*mukhalladūn*).

OPINION: Some of them said: What is meant by that is that they are youths who are all the same age; they neither degenerate nor die.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—[ʿ]Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *mukhalladūn*, "They do not die."

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is that they are adorned with earrings and bracelets.[3]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion that is most likely to be correct is to say:

1 For Ṭabarī's commentary on Q 36:56, see volume 1.
2 The Dār Hajar edition fills a significant lacuna of the following sentence and a half in earlier print editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:295 (note 1).
3 Al-Farrāʾ mentions this opinion without endorsing it; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:123.

its meaning is that they neither degenerate nor die, because that is the more apparent meaning. The Arabs say of a man who grows old without becoming hoary, "He is immortal (*innahu la-mukhallad*)."[1] This is the nominal form *mufaʿʿal* [Form II] from the root *al-khuld*.

INTERPRETATION OF *With goblets and ewers*

The word *akwāb* is the plural of *kūb* ("goblet"), which is a type of ewer with a wide top and without a long spout.[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *with akwāb*, "The *akwāb* are silver jars."

Ibn Bashshār—Muʾammal—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *With goblets and ewers*, "The ewers (*abārīq*) are those which Q. 56:18 have handles, while the goblets (*akwāb*) do not have handles."

Ibn Bashshār—[ʿ]Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "The goblets do not have handles."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Rajāʾ said, "Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] was asked about the meaning of *akwāb*. He replied, 'They are ewers from which [a drink] is poured for them.'"

Abū Kurayb and Abū'l-Saʾib—Ibn Idrīs said, "I heard my father say, 'One day, Abū Ṣāliḥ, the companion of [Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib] al-Kalbī, passed by when al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said to me [Idrīs], while I was sitting with him, "Ask him." So I said [to Abū Ṣāliḥ], "What are the *akwāb*?" He replied, "They are silver jars with large round mouths, whereas ewers have long spouts."'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *with akwāb*, "They lack handles."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *with goblets and ewers*, "*The goblets* that are used with drinks do not have long spouts and are smaller than *the ewers*."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *with goblets and ewers*, "The *goblets* are smaller than the *ewers* and lack handles."

1 This sentence is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:122–3.
2 This is very close to Abū ʿUbayda's explanation of *kawb*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:249.

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "The *akwāb* are jars that lack handles. In Nabatean, they are called *kūbā*."

ṬABARĪ SAID: This is what al-Aʿshā meant when he recited,

ṣarifiyyatan tayyiban ta'muhā
lahā zabadun bayna kūbin wa-dan

A delicious, pure Ṣarīfī wine
Foamy [from travelling] between the goblet and jug.

As for *the ewers*—they have handles.

INTERPRETATION OF *and a cup from a pure spring*

He says: *And a cup* of wine *from a pure* drink, flowing forth from springs.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Q. 56:18-19 ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—Alī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And a cup from a pure spring*, "[Meaning:] wine".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And a cup from a pure spring*, "In other words, flowing wine."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And a cup from a pure spring*, "The *cup* is flowing wine."

Abū Sinān—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And a cup from a pure spring*, "Flowing wine".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said: al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "Every cup (*kaʾs*) in the Qurʾān is wine."[1]

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Salama b. Nubayṭ—al-Ḍaḥḥāk.

INTERPRETATION OF *From which they get no aching of the head*

He says: Their heads do not ache from drinking it and becoming intoxicated.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā al-Suddī—Sharīk—Sālim—Saʿīd [b. Jubayr] said, concerning His statement *lā yuṣadaʿūna ʿanhā*, "Their heads do not ache."

1 This report is absent from earlier print editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:298 (note 2).

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *lā yuṣadaʿūna ʿanhā*, "There is no headache from it."

Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning *lā yuṣadaʿūna ʿanhā*, "Their heads do not ache."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *lā yuṣadaʿūna ʿanhā*, "Their heads do not ache."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *lā yuṣadaʿūna ʿanhā*, "In other words, a headache."

INTERPRETATION OF *nor any madness*

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the correct reading of that. Most of the Medinan and Basran reciters read *lā yunzafūn*, with a *fatḥa* on the *zāy*, with the meaning "Their minds are not lost (*lā tunzafu ʿuqūluhum*)."[1] The majority of Kufan reciters read *lā yunzifūn*, with a *kasra* under the *zāy*, meaning "Their beverage is not exhausted."[2] Q. 56:19

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in our estimation, is that these are both well-attested readings that are sound in meaning and that the reciter will be correct reading either one of them.

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of this verse along the same lines of the disagreement of the Qurʾān reciters, whose opinions we have just mentioned. We have explained sufficiently the correct opinion in Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt (37), such that it is unnecessary to repeat our explanation here, although we will mention some of the interpreters' opinions at this place, so that no one will suppose that its meaning is different in this place from its meaning at [Q.37:48].

An account of those among them who said that its meaning is: "Their minds are not lost":

Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā—Sharīk—Sālim—Saʿīd [b. Jubayr] said, concerning *lā yunzafūn*, "Their minds are not lost."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *lā yunzafūn*, "Their minds are not lost."

On another occasion, Ibn Ḥumayd said to us, "Their minds do not leave them."

1 Ibn Aṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ibn Kathīr, Nāfiʿ, Abū ʿAmr and Ibn ʿĀmir in his commentary on Q.37:48; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 4:472.
2 Ibn Aṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ḥamza, ʿĀṣim and Kisāʾī; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 4:472. He notes in his commentary on Q.56:19 that this is also the reading of Ibn Abī Isḥāq, Juḥdarī, al-Aʿmash, Ṭalḥa, Ibn Masʿūd, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and ʿĪsā; 5:242.

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *lā yunzafūn*, "Their minds are not lost."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *wa-lā hum ʿanhā yunzafūn* (Q.37:47), "It does not overpower their minds."[1]

Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning God's statement *wa-lā hum ʿanhā yunzafūn* (Q.37:47), "It does not overpower their minds."

INTERPRETATION OF *And fruit that they prefer; and flesh of fowls that they desire*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: These *immortal youths going round about* these foremost [believers] with *fruit* from among the fruits of the Garden *they prefer* for themselves. Their souls desire this fruit, *and flesh of fowls that they desire*. He says: They also go round about them with *flesh of fowls* that their souls *desire*.

Q. 56:20–2

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:22] *And (there are) fair ones with wide, lovely eyes,* [56:23] *Like hidden pearls,* [56:24] *A reward for what they used to do.* [56:25] *In it they hear no vain speaking, no incitement* [56:26] *(Naught) but the saying, Peace, Peace.*

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of His statement *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes*.[2]

OPINION:[3] Most of the Kufan and some of the Medinan reciters read *ḥūrin ʿinin* in the genitive case,[4] following the case endings of the preceding verses about the fruit and fowl (Q.56:20–21), even though [*the Foremost*] are not served [these *fair ones*] in the same manner. Rather, when the intended meaning [of the words] is obvious, they are made to follow the case ending of the words that precede it. For example, one of the poets said,

1 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:300 (note 4).
2 For more on the houris (*ḥūr ʿin*) of the Garden, see Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.44:54, above, as well as below, after Q.56:24.
3 All of the content of this passage, save the final sentence, is part of a more extensive discussion in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:123–4.
4 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ḥamza, Kisāʾī, al-Mufaḍḍal (from ʿĀṣim), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, al-Aʿmash, Abū'l-Qaʿqāʿ and Amr b. ʿUbayd; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:242.

idhā mā'l-ghāniyātu barazna yawman
wa-zajjajna'l-ḥawājiba wa'l-ʿuyūnā

When the wealthy women came out one day
With thinned eyebrows and [kohl] on their eyes.

Even though "eyes" are lined with kohl and cannot be thinned (*lā tuzajjajū*), [the poet] gives "eyes" the same case ending as the preceding word "eyebrows", because the listener understands the meaning of that.

Likewise, another poet said,

tasmaʿu li'l-aḥshāʾi minhu laghatā
wa-li'l-yadayni jusʾatan wa-badadā

You hear incomprehensible sounds coming from his intestines
And his two hands are coarse, [hanging] at a distance from one another.

The word *jusʾa* means "a coarseness of the hand", which cannot be heard [but is in the accusative case like *laghat*].

Q. 56:23

OPINION: Some Medinan, Meccan, Kufan and Basran reciters read *ḥūrun ʿīnun* in the nominative case as the subject of a nominal sentence.[1] They said: The *fair ones* are not served [like the fruit and fowl to *the Foremost* ones]. It is possible syntactically for the *fair ones* to be coordinated with the *fruit* and *fowl*, but [instead] it is nominative, with the meaning "With them are *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes*," or "They have *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes*."[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in my estimation, is that these are both well-attested readings, as a group of reciters is associated with each one and their meanings are close, so the reciter is correct reading either one.

The word *ḥūr* is the plural of *ḥawrāʾ*, which refers to an intensely black pupil in the eye. The word *ʿīn* is the plural of *ʿaynāʾ*, which are large, beautiful eyes.

INTERPRETATION OF *Like hidden pearls*

He says: In their white purity and beauty, they are *like hidden pearls* that are enclosed in a veil (*kinn*).

INTERPRETATION OF *A reward for what they used to do*

1 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to the remaining "seven" famous reciters, who would be Nāfiʿ, Abū Amr, Ibn ʿĀmir, Ibn Kathīr and Ḥafṣ' narration from ʿĀṣim; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:242.
2 This explanation, with a slightly different wording, is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:123.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: This is a reward for them, from God, for the deeds they did in the temporal world and compensation for their obedience to Him.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Ibn Yamān—[Sufyān] ibn ʿUyayna—ʿAmr—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *ḥūrun ʿīnun*, "Intensely dark black [pupils] and intensely white [eyes], meaning sclera (*bayāḍ al-ʿayn*)."

[Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī]—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān—a man—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "*Ḥūrun*, meaning 'white'; *ʿīnun*, [meaning] 'large eyes'."

Ibn ʿAbbās al-Dūrī—Hajjāj—Ibn Jurayj—ʿAṭāʾ al-Khurāsānī—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The *ḥūr* is the blackness of the pupil of the eye."

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa—Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Aslamī—ʿAbbād b. Manṣūr al-Nājī—al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, "The *ḥūr* are the most wonderful women of humanity."

Q. 56:24

Ibn ʿArafa—Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad—Layth b. Abī Sulaym said, "I was informed that the *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes* were created from saffron."

Al-Ḥasan b. Yazīd al-Ṭaḥḥān—Āʾisha, the wife of Layth—Layth—Mujāhid said, "The *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes* were created from saffron."

Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd al-Muḥāribī—ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd—Layth—Mujāhid said, "The *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes* were created from saffron."

Others said: Rather, the meaning of His statement *ḥūr* is that they are women who dazzle anyone who glances at them.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān—a man—Mujāhid said, concerning *ḥūrun ʿīnun*, "Anyone who glances at them is dazzled."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning His statement *Like hidden pearls*, and a report from the Messenger of God (ṣ) has come [to us] on this topic:

Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Muḥammad b. al-Faraj al-Ṣadafī al-Dimyāṭī—ʿAmr b. Hāshim—Ibn Abī Karīma—Hishām b. Ḥassān—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—his mother—Umm Salama said, "I said, 'O Messenger of God, inform me about God's statement *Like hidden pearls*.' He replied, 'Their purity is like the purity of pearls in seashells, untouched by human hands.'"[1]

1 This *ḥadīth* is not found in Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-manthūr* and I have not located it in any other *Ḥadīth* collections. The editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* located a longer variation of it in Ṭabarānī's *al-Muʿjam al-ausaṭ*; see 22:304 (note 6).

INTERPRETATION OF *In it they hear no vain speaking, no incitement*

He says: *In it they hear no* false statements, *no incitement*. He says: There is nothing in [the Garden] that will incite them [to sin].

One of the Basran experts in the Arabic language[1] said, concerning *In it they hear no laghwan, no taʾthīm*: *Taʾthīm* (*incitement*) is inaudible, while *laghw* (*vain speaking*) is audible. This is similar to the expression "I ate bread and milk," even though one does not "eat" milk. This expression is valid as long as something which is eaten is mentioned along with the milk.

INTERPRETATION OF (*Naught*) *but the saying, Peace, Peace*

He says: The only utterance they will hear in [the Garden] will be "Peace (*salāman*), Peace" meaning: "Be secure from that which you dislike."

There are two ways for interpreting why His statement *Peace* is in the accusative case.[2] First, if you wish, you can make it an appositive (*tābiʿ*) of the word *qīlan* (*saying*), so the word *Peace* is, in this case, *the saying*. It is as if it were said: *In it they hear no vain speaking, no incitement*, except *Peace, Peace*. Instead, they hear *Peace, Peace*. Q. 56:25-7

The second way is for *salām* to be in the accusative case on account of the influence of *qīl* upon it, such that the meaning in this case is: (*Naught*) *but the saying* of *Peace, Peace*. However, when the word *qīl* is an indefinite noun with *tanwīn*, the word *salām* must be put in the accusative case, on account of the influence of *qīl* upon it.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:27] *And the Companions of the Right—O Companions of the Right!*
[56:28] *Among thornless lote trees* [56:29] *And clustered banana trees,*
[56:30] *And extended shade,* [56:31] *And water gushing*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to his Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): *And the Companions of the Right*, who are those who will be taken to the right side on Resurrection Day, they will be given their books [recording their deeds] in their right hands, O Muḥammad, *O Companions of the Right!* In other words, what [great] things are in store for them! What goodness has been prepared for them!

1 The content of this passage is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:249.
2 Both of these explanations are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:124. They are also found in al-Akhfash's *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* (2:701–2) with a somewhat different wording.

It has been alleged that these people are the children of the believers.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Maʿmar—Abū Hishām al-Makhzūmī—ʿAbd al-Wāḥid—al-Aʿmash—ʿUthmān b. Qays—Abū ʿUmar Zādhān said, "I heard ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r) say, concerning *And the Companions of the Right*—O *Companions of the Right!*, "*The Companions of the Right* are the children of the believers."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And the Companions of the Right*—O *Companions of the Right!*, "What is in store for them? What has been prepared for them?"

ṬABARĪ SAID: Then the declarative statement (or report) begins, concerning what has been prepared for them in the Garden, and what their condition will be when they enter it. He said: They will be *among thornless lote trees*, meaning among the fruit of an overladen lote tree, whose thorns have disappeared.

Q. 56:28

INTERPRETATION OF *Among thornless lote trees*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation [of *among makhḍūd lote trees*].

OPINION: Some of them said: By *makhḍūd*, what is meant is that which has been shorn of its thorns, such that it is thornless.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *among makhḍūd lote trees*,[1] "They are thornless."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Their bending is due to their being overladen [with fruit]. It may also be that they have been cut to the point of losing their thorns, so they are thornless."

Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—al-Muʿtamir [b. Sulaymān al-Taymī]—his father said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Muḥammad claimed that Ikrima said,[2] 'They are thornless.'"

1 The Dār Ḥajar edition fills in a lacuna in earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* beginning here and ending at the end of the following *isnād*; Dār Ḥajar, 22:306 (note 1).

2 Following the superior reading of *zaʿama Muḥammad anna ʿIkrima qāla* in the Dār Ḥajar edition; 22:307 (note 4). This Muḥammad is probably the Basran Successor Muḥammad b. Sīrīn.

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ḥabīb—ʿIkrima said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "They are thornless."

Ibn Bashshār—Hawdha b. Khalīfa—ʿAwf—Qasāma b. Zuhayr said, concerning His statement *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Their thorns are shorn off, hence they are thornless."

Abū Humayd al-Ḥimṣī, Aḥmad b. al-Mughīra—Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd—Umar b. ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Aḥmūsī[1]—al-Safr b. Nusayr said, concerning God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Their thorns are shorn off, so they are thornless."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "We were informed that they are overladen with fruit and thornless."

Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—[Abū Hilāl][2]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "They are thornless."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Isḥāq—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "They are thornless." Q. 56:28

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit—Ikrima said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "They are thornless."

On another occasion, Ibn Ḥumayd narrated to me, by means of this *isnād*, that Ikrima said, "They are thornless and overladen [with fruit]."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by it is that [the trees] are overladen [with fruit] (*al-mūqaru ḥamlan*).

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "They say, 'They are overladen [with fruit].'"

Muḥammad b. Sinān al-Qazzāz—Abū Ḥudhayfa—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Overladen".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Overladen".

1 Following the *isnād* in the Dār Ḥajar edition; 22:307 (notes 7, 8).

2 There appears to be a lacuna in this *isnād*, which reads Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—Qatāda. The Dār Ḥajar editors supply the name Abū Hilāl on the basis of the *isnād* found in Ibn Kathīr's commentary; see Dār Ḥajar, 22:308 (note 2).

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Overladen".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *among makhḍūd lote trees*, "Their fruits are heavier than their tops [can bear]."

INTERPRETATION OF *And clustered banana trees*

The Qur'ān reciters read *ṭalḥ* ("banana trees") with a *ḥāʾ*, and this is how the word appears in all of the Qur'ān codices among the people of the garrison cities.

It has been narrated that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r) read it as *ṭalʿ*, with an *ʿayn*:

ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Zuhrī—Sufyān—Zakariyyā—al-Ḥasan b. Saʿd—his father: ʿAlī recited this verse as *ṭalʿin manḍūdin*.

Saʿīd b. Yaḥyā al-Umawī—my father—Mujālid—al-Ḥasan b. Saʿd—Qays b. ʿUbād said,[1] "A man recited *ṭalḥin manḍūd* in the presence of ʿAlī. ʿAlī said, 'What is this *ṭalḥ*? It is *wa-ṭalʿin manḍūd*.' Then he recited *ṭalʿuhā haḍīm* (Q.26:148). We said, 'Should we not change this verse [in our codex of the Qur'ān]?' ʿAlī said, 'No, the Qur'ān [text] cannot be disturbed or changed at this time.'"

Q. 56:29

As for the word *ṭalḥ*, [Abū ʿUbayda] Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā said, "It is used by the Arabs to mean a great tree with numerous thorns."[2] He recited the following poetic verse said by some of the singing camel drivers (*ḥudāt*):

bashsharahā dalīluhā wa-qālā
ghadan tarayna'l-ṭalḥa wa'l-ḥibālā

Good tidings gave the guide to [the she-camel], saying,
Tomorrow you'll see the tall thorny trees and dunes [of home]!

As for the interpretation of the Companions and Successors, they all say [that *ṭalḥ*] is a banana tree (*mawz*).

An account of those who said that:

Ḥumayd b. Masʿada—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Abū Saʿīd, the *mawlā* of Banū Raqāsh, said, "I asked Ibn ʿAbbās about the meaning of *al-ṭalḥ al-manḍūd*, and he replied, 'It is a banana tree.'"

1 Following the readings of "Mujālid" and "ʿUbād" in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:309 (notes 5, 6).
2 This is one of the rare cases in which Ṭabarī openly identifies Abū ʿUbayda as the source of his philological information. This passage, including the verse of poetry, is found in *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:250. Abū ʿUbayda also mentions that the exegetes (*mufassirūn*) claimed that *ṭalḥ* is "a banana tree".

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Abū Saʿīd al-Raqāshī said that he heard Ibn ʿAbbās say, "The *ṭalḥ al-manḍūd* is a banana tree."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī] and Abū Kurayb—Ibn ʿUlayya—Sulaymān—Abū Saʿīd al-Raqāshī said, "I said to Ibn ʿAbbās, 'What is the *ṭalḥ al-manḍūd*?' He replied, 'It is a banana tree.'"

Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—al-Muʿtamir [b. Sulaymān al-Taymī]—his father—Abū Saʿīd al-Raqāshī said, "I asked Ibn ʿAbbās about the meaning of *ṭalḥ*, and he replied, 'It is a banana tree.'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—[Sulaymān] al-Taymī—Abū Saʿīd al-Raqāshī—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And ṭalḥ manḍūd*, "The banana tree."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—[Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib] al-Kalbī—al-Ḥasan b. Saʿd—ʿAlī (r) said, concerning *And ṭalḥ manḍūd*, "The banana tree".

Q. 56:29

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Abū Bishr: a man from Basra heard Ibn ʿAbbās say about the *ṭalḥ al-manḍūd*, "It is a banana tree".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And ṭalḥ manḍūd*, "[These are] your bananas, since in Taʾif (*bi-wajjin*) they used to be impressed by its shade and scent from its banana trees."[1]

Muḥammad b. Sinān—Abū Ḥudhayfa—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—ʿAṭāʾ said, concerning His statement *And ṭalḥ manḍūd*, "The banana tree".

Ibn Bashshār—Hawdha b. Khalīfa—ʿAwf—Qasāma said, "The *ṭalḥ al-manḍūd* is a banana tree."

Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning God's statement *And ṭalḥ manḍūd*, "The banana tree".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And ṭalḥ manḍūd*, "The banana tree."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And ṭalḥ manḍūd*, "We were informed that it is a banana tree."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His

1 The Dār Hajar editors gloss *wajj* as Taʾif or the Valley of Taʾif; see 22:311 (note 4).

statement *And ṭalḥ mandūd*, "God knows best what it means, although the people of Yemen call banana trees *ṭalḥ*."

INTERPRETATION OF *clustered* (*mandūd*)

The word *mandūd* means: "part of [the banana tree] is covered (*nudida*) by another part; they are overlapping."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-'Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *And mandūd banana trees*, "Some of them are over others."

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And mandūd banana trees*, "[These are] your bananas, since in Ta'if (*bi-wajjin*) they used to be impressed by its shade and scent from its banana trees."

Q. 56:29-30

INTERPRETATION OF *And extended shade*

He says: "They are under a permanent *shade* that cannot be removed by the sun. Everything that is continuous and unending is ***mamdūd***."[2]

The poet Labīd recited,

ghalaba'l-baqā'a wa-kuntu ghayra mughallabi
dahrun tawīlun dā'imun mamdūdu

Though I was unvanquished
An endless, eternal Fate vanquished all earthly existence.

Several reports have come to us that are similar to what we have just said concerning that, and some scholars have also expressed opinions in agreement with them. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Isḥāq—'Amr b. Maymūn said, concerning *And the mamdūd shade*, "500,000 years".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Ismā'īl b. Abī Khālid—Ziyād, the *mawlā* of Banū Makhzūm—Abū Hurayra said, "Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years. Recite, if you wish, *And extended shade*." This statement reached Ka'b [al-Aḥbār], who said, "He has spoken truthfully. By the One Who

1 See Dār Ḥajar, 22:312 (notes 4, 5).
2 This explanation, including the verse of poetry, is found in Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:250.

has sent down the Torah in accordance with the tongue of Moses and the *Furqān* in accordance with the tongue of Muḥammad! Were a man to ride a young camel and then circle the trunk of this tree, he would never reach [the end of his journey] before he would fall from his beast in exhaustion. Truly God (Mighty and Majestic is He) cultivated it by His hand and breathed His spirit into it. Its branches extend beyond the walls of the Garden, and there is not a river in the Garden, save that it flows from the root of this tree."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—Ismā'īl b. Abī Khālid—Ziyād, the *mawlā* of Banū Makhzūm—Abū Hurayra.[1]

Ibn Bashshār—'Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Isḥāq—'Amr b. Maymūn said, "The breadth of the *mamdūd shade* is [the distance covered by] a journey of 70,000 years."

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Abū Yaḥyā b. Sulaymān—Hilāl b. 'Alī—'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī 'Amra—Abū Hurayra said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years. Recite, if you wish, *And extended shade*."[2]

Q. 56:30

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Muḥammad b. Ziyād—Abū Hurayra said, "I heard the Prophet (ṣ) say, 'Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years. Recite, if you wish, *And extended shade*.'"

Ibn Bashshār—'Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Shu'ba—Abū'l-Ḍaḥḥāk—Abū Hurayra said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree, the *Tree of Immortality* (Q.20:120),[3] whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years."

Ibn al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Ja'far—Shu'ba—Abū'l-Ḍaḥḥāk—Abū Hurayra—the Prophet (ṣ) said, "Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over seventy or 100 years. This is the *Tree of Immortality* (Q.20:120)."

1 Ṭabarī notes that the only difference between these reports is that the former has *wa-mā fī'l-janna nahr*, whereas the latter has *mā fī'l-janna min nahr*, which does not affect the meaning.
2 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is also found in the *Sahīh*s of Bukhārī and Muslim; the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī; the *Musannaf*s of 'Abd al-Razzāq and Ibn Abī Shayba; and the Qur'ānic commentaries of 'Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 7:223. Note that the following four reports are all variations of this *hadith*.
3 Arabic: *shajarat al-khuld*. This expression occurs in the Qur'ān in the following verse: *But Satan whispered to him, saying, O Adam, shall I show you the Tree of Immortality and power that never wears away?* (Q.20:120).

Ibn al-Muthannā—Abū Dāwūd [al-Ṭayālisī]—ʿImrān—Qatāda—Anas—the Prophet (ṣ) said, "Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years without passing beyond it."[1]

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn al-Muthannā—Abū Dāwūd—ʿImrān—Muḥammad b. Ziyād—Abū Hurayra—the Prophet (ṣ).[2]

Another nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Ḥammād b. Salama—Muḥammad b. Ziyād—Abū Hurayra—the Prophet (ṣ).

Abū Kurayb—ʿAbda and ʿAbd al-Raḥmīn—Muḥammad b. ʿAmr—Abū Salama—Abū Hurayra said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "In the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years without passing beyond it. Recite, if you wish, His statement, *And extended shade*."

Q. 56:30

Abū Kurayb—Firdaws—Layth—Saʿīd b. Abī Saʿīd—his father—Abū Hurayra said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Muḥāribī—Muḥammad b. ʿAmr—Abū Salama—Abū Hurayra—the Messenger of God (ṣ).

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Khālid b. al-Ḥārith—ʿAwf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "It has reached me that the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'In the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years without passing beyond it.'"[3]

Nearly identical reports have been narrated to us from Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Khālid—ʿAwf—Muḥammad b. Sīrīn—Abū Hurayra—the Prophet (ṣ), and from Khilās.[4]

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī, the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, and the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:223.

2 Ṭabarī includes here another five narrations of the Abū Hurayra *ḥadīth* mentioned previously in a footnote.

3 This is a *mursal* narration of either Anas's or Abū Hurayra's *ḥadīth* mentioned above.

4 Khilās is a Baṣran Successor; it is unclear whether he heard this report from Abū Hurayra or whether it just reached him, as was the above case of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

Abū Kurayb—Abū Bakr [b. ʿAyyāsh]—Abū Ḥaṣīn[1] said, "We were at the door of some place, with Abū Ṣāliḥ[2] and Shaqīq al-Ḍabbī,[3] when Abū Ṣāliḥ related to us that Abū Hurayra said, 'Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over seventy years.' Abū Ṣāliḥ said [to Shaqīq], 'Do you reject what Abū Hurayra said?' [Shaqīq] said, 'I do not reject Abū Hurayra; rather, I reject you!'" Abū Ḥaṣīn said, "This was a painful day for the Qurʾān reciters."

Muḥammad b. Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning *And extended shade*, "We were informed, on the authority of Anas b. Mālik, that he said, 'Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years without passing beyond it.'"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And extended shade*, "Anas b. Mālik informed us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) said, 'Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years without passing beyond it.'"

Q. 56:30–1

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda—Anas—the Prophet (ṣ) said, "Truly, in the Garden, there is a tree whose shade extends the distance a rider would cover over 100 years without passing beyond it."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from [Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Muḥammad b. Ziyād—Abū Hurayra.

INTERPRETATION OF *And water gushing*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "There is also *gushing water* in there, meaning flowing without channels or trenches," as we have been informed by:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *And gushing water*, "It flows without channels."

1 Abū Ḥaṣīn ʿUthmān b. ʿĀṣim al-Asadī (d. 128/745–6) was a prominent Arab Qurʾān reciter in Kufa, who was known to have had ʿUthmānī sympathies in a generally pro-ʿAlid city; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 5:412–17.

2 There were multiple Abū Ṣāliḥs in Kufa who transmitted from Abū Hurayra; this one is probably Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām (or Bādhān), who was infamous for his commentary (*tafsīr*) allegedly from Ibn ʿAbbās. He lived until about 120/738; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 5:37–8.

3 Shaqīq b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḍabbī was a Kufan storyteller with Khārijī leanings; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 4:256–7.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:32] And fruit in plenty [56:33] Neither out of reach nor yet inaccessible, [56:34] And raised couches; [56:35] Lo! We have created them a (new) creation [56:36] And made them virgins, [56:37] Lovers, all of the same age, [56:38] For the Companions of the Right

God (Mighty and Majestic is He) says: *And fruit in plenty, neither out of reach nor yet inaccessible.* God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: In [the Garden] there is *fruit in plenty*, none of which is ever out of season, so the inhabitants therein can enjoy it whenever they want it. This is unlike the temporal world, in which summer fruits are unavailable in the winter. Nor is the fruit inaccessible, since there are no thorns on any of the tree branches, nor are the fruits out of reach. This, too, contrasts with earthly fruit, which is frequently distant when one desires it, or inaccessible, on account of the tree's thorns. However, [in the Garden], whenever one of [its inhabitants] desires a fruit, it lands immediately in his mouth, or is brought within easy reach for him to grab with his hand.

Q. 56:32-4

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. We have already mentioned most of the narrations previously, so here we shall mention a single additional one:[1]

Muḥammad b. Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *neither out of reach nor yet inaccessible*, "Neither thorns nor distance prevent the individual [from acquiring the fruit]."[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *And raised couches*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "For them, in [the Garden], there are long, *raised couches*, some of which are on top of others, just as one can say 'an elevated structure',"[3] as we have been informed by:

Abū Kurayb—Rishdīn b. Sa'd—'Amr b. al-Ḥārith—Darrāj Abū'l-Samḥ—Abū'l-Haytham—Abū Sa'īd—the Prophet (ṣ) said, concerning His statement *And raised couches*, "They are raised the equivalent of the distance between the sky and earth—a distance that would take 500 years to traverse."[4]

1 See Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.11:108 (not included in this translation).
2 There is a short lacuna in the Halabī edition of *al-Jāmi' al-bayān* from here until the word "others". The missing text is present in the Būlāq edition (27:106) and the Dār Hajar edition (22:319).
3 This explanation combines the glosses of Abū 'Ubayda and al-Farrā'; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:250; and *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:125.
4 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Sunans* of Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī; the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān; the Qur'ānic commentary of Ibn Abī Ḥātim; and books by Ibn Abī'l-Dunyā, Rūyānī, Abū'l-Shaykh and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:224. He mentions that Tirmidhī grades it as "fair (*ḥasan*)".

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—'Amr—Darrāj—Abū'l-Haytham—Abū Sa'īd—the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, concerning *And raised couches*, "By the One in Whose hand is my soul! They are raised" (and then he repeated the previous report).

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*Lo!* We have created them a new creation and given them new existence." Abū 'Ubayda said, "What He means by that are the *fair ones with wide, lovely eyes*, whom He mentioned previously."[1] He said: *And (there are) fair ones with wide, lovely eyes, like hidden pearls* (Q.56:22–23)—*Lo! We have created them a (new) creation.*

Al-Akhfash said, "The third-person plural pronoun 'them (*hunna*)' refers to females whom He has not mentioned prior to this verse."[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Q. 56:35–6

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—Qatāda said, concerning *Lo! ansha'nāhunna inshā'an*, "We have created them in a (new) creation."

Abū Kurayb—Mu'āwiya b. Hishām—Shaybān—Jābir al-Ju'fī—Yazīd b. Murra—Salama b. Yazīd—the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, concerning this verse *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation*, "From non-virgins and virgins."[3]

INTERPRETATION OF *and made them virgins*

He says: "We made them *virgins* after they had been [created or old women],"[4] as we have been informed by:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. 'Ubayda—Yazīd b. Abān al-Raqāshī—Anas b. Mālik—the Prophet (ṣ) said, concerning *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation*, "Old women who were

1 See Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:251.
2 See al-Akhfash, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:702. Generally, a pronoun must refer back to a previously specified subject; hence, Abū 'Ubayda identifies the houris in Q.56:22 as this subject. However, when the suppressed subject of a pronoun is obvious, the early grammarians generally make an exception to this rule. Note that this is one of the very rare occasions when Ṭabarī mentions Sa'īd b. Mas'ada al-Balkhī al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ as his source for linguistic information.
3 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Musnad* of Ṭayālisī, the Qur'ānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh, and books by Ibn Abī'l-Dunyā, Ṭabarānī, Ibn Qāni' and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:224. Note that the 2004 Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya edition of *al-Durr al-manthūr* erroneously has Salama b. Zayd instead of Salama b. Yazīd al-Ju'fī. According to Ibn Hajar, Salama was a Companion of the Prophet; *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 2:759.
4 These are the suggestions by the Dār Hajar editors for the abrupt ending of this sentence after the clause *ba'da idh kunna*; 22:320 (note 4).

dim-sighted (*ʿumshan*) and dirty-eyed (*rumṣan*)[1] in the temporal world.":

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī][3]—**Mūsā b. ʿUbayda**—Yazīd b. Abān al-Raqāshī—Anas b. Mālik—**the Prophet** (ṣ) said, concerning *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation*, **"Women—old** women who were dim-sighted and dirty-eyed in the temporal world."

ʿUmar b. Ismāʿīl b. Mujālid—Muḥammad b. Rabīʿa **al-Kilābī**—Mūsā b. ʿUbayda al-Rabadhī—Yazīd al-Raqāshī—**Anas b. Mālik said**: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, concerning His statement *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation*, "Some of them had been old women who were dim-sighted and dirty-eyed in the temporal world."

Sawwār—Abd Allāh b. Dāwūd[4]—Mūsā b. **'Ubayda al-Rabadhī**—Yazīd al-Raqāshī—Anas b. Mālik—the Prophet (ṣ) said[5] nearly the same thing [as cited in the previous narration], except he said "concerning the old women."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—Mūsā b. **ʿUbayda**—Yazīd al-Raqāshī—Anas b. Mālik—the Prophet (ṣ) said, concerning His statement *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation*, "They are **the women** who were dim-sighted, dirty-eyed old women in the temporal world."

Q. 56:36

Ibn Bashshār—Amr b. ʿĀṣim—al-Muʿtamir [b. Sulaymān **al-Taymī**]—his father—Qatāda—Ṣafwān b. Miḥraz said, concerning **His** statement *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation, and made them virgins*, "**Among** them [were] old, dirty-eyed women."

Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation, and made them virgins*, "Truly among them are old and trembling women, whom God created in this [new] form."

1 "Someone having *ramas* in his/her eye." The word *ramas* means "dry, white filth that collects or concretes in the inner corner of the eye"; Lane, "*r-m-ṣ*".

2 According to Suyūṭī, Anas' *hadith* is also found in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī; the Qur'ānic commentaries of Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh; and books by Firyābī and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:224. The three reports which follow are variant narrations of this *hadith*.

3 Since all of the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* fail to mention "Sufyān" in the *isnād*, the Dār Hajar editors inserted it on the basis of the previous *isnād*; 22:321 (note 1).

4 The Dār Hajar edition, along with the earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, has Sawwār b. Abd Allāh b. Dāwūd *an* Mūsā which is impossible. Ṭabarī's teacher is almost certainly the famous judge Sawwār b. Abd Allāh b. Sawwār (d. 245/858–9). My hunch is that Sawwār's source is Abd Allāh b. Dāwūd al-Khuraybī (d. 211/826–7), but the sources do not offer any corroborating evidence that Sawwār narrated anything from this Abd Allāh, or that Abd Allāh heard anything from the weak narrator Mūsā b. Ubayda (d. 152/769).

5 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition identify a lacuna from here until the end of the following report's *isnād* in the later manuscripts and earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:321 (note 3).

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation, and made them virgins*, "Ṣafwān b. Miḥraz would say, 'Truly among them were old and trembling women, and then God made them like what you hear [described in these verses].'"

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *abkāran*, "Virgins".

Ahmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Muḥammad b. al-Faraj al-Ṣadafī al-Dimyāṭī—ʿAmr b. Hāshim—Ibn Abī Karīma—Hishām b. Ḥassān—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—his mother—Umm Salama, wife of the Prophet (ṣ), said, "I said, 'O Messenger of God, inform me [of the meaning] of God's statement *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation and made them virgins, lovers, all of the same age, for the Companions of the Right*.' He replied, 'These are women who were old, dirty-eyed and hoary at their time of death. God recreated them after they were old, and made them virgins.'"[1]

Q. 56:36–7

Abū ʿUbayd al-Waṣṣābī—Muḥammad b. Ḥimyar—Thābit b. ʿAjlān—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Lo! We have created them a (new) creation and made them virgins, lovers, all of the same age*, "These are humans, women, who used to be in the temporal world, whom God will recreate as virgins, *all of the same age, lovers*."

INTERPRETATION OF *Lovers* (*ʿuruban*)

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *We made them virgins*, flirtatious and loving towards their partners, beautiful in their wifely obedience (*taba ul*).

The word *ʿurub* is a plural form, the singular of which is *ʿarūb*, just as the singular of "messengers (*rusul*)" is *rasūl*, and the singular of "people walking at a slow pace (*qutuf*)" is *qaṭūf*. An example of it is the statement of Labīd:[2]

wa-fi'l-ḥudāji ʿarūban ghayru fāḥishatin
rayyā'l-rawādifi ya'shā dūnahā'l-baṣaru

An uncorrupted lover among the loads
(making) two of the rear guards blind to everything other than her.

1 According to Suyūṭī, this is part of a longer *hadith* that is primarily concerned with the elucidation of the houris in Sūrat al-Raḥmān (55). It is also found in the Qur'ānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh and one of the compilations of Ṭabarānī; see *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:211–12.

2 This verse is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:251.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ismāʿīl b. Abān and Ismāʿīl b. Ṣubayḥ—**Abū Uways**—Thawr b. Zayd—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *ʿuruban, all of the same age*, "Those who fawn over [them]."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *ʿuruban*, "Passionate lovers (*ʿawāshiq*)".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—**my father**—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "The *ʿurub* are women who are loving and affectionate with their partners."

Sulaymān b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Ghaylānī—Ayyūb—**Qurra**—**al-Ḥasan** [al-Baṣrī] said, "The *ʿurub* are passionate lovers."

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Simāk—Ikrima said, concerning the verse in which *ʿurub* is mentioned, "The *ʿurub* are women with whom one flirts (*maghnūja*)." Q. 56:37

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Shuʿba—Simāk—**ʿIkrima said**, "They are women with whom one flirts."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—ʿUmāra b. Abī Ḥafṣa—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *ʿuruban*, "Coquettish women".

ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Azdī—Yaḥyā b. Yamān—Abū Isḥāq al-Taymī—Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥayyān—Ibn Burayda[1] said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "It means *shakila* in the Meccan dialect and *maghnūja* in the Medinan dialect."[2]

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from **Abū Kurayb**—Ibn Yamān—Ibrāhīm al-Taymī, meaning Ibn al-Zibriqān—Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥayyān—Ibn Burayda.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—ʿUthmān b. Bashshār—**Tamīm** b. Ḥadhlam said, concerning His statement *ʿuruban*, "Beautiful wifely obedience (*tabaʿul*)."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Mughīra—ʿUthmān b. Bashshār—Tamīm b. Ḥadhlam said, concerning His statement *ʿuruban*, "The *ʿariba* is one who has [the quality of] beautiful wifely obedience. The Arabs say of a woman who exhibits beautiful wifely obedience, 'She truly is the *ʿariba*!'"

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Usāma b. Zayd b. Aslam—**his father** said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "Women who speak beautifully."

1 The manuscripts and earlier editions have Abū Burayda, but the Dār Hajar editors changed it to Ibn Burayda on the basis of biographical dictionaries; see 22:325 (notes 1, 4).
2 Both words mean "coquettish woman" in English.

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid said, "Passionate lovers".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Sharīk—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid—ʿIkrima.

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Idrīs—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "The *ʿurub* are lovers."

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "The *ʿurub* are passionate lovers."

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ghālib Abū'l-Hudhayl—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "They are lovers."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sālim al-Afṭas—Saʿīd b. Jubayr.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ghālib Abū'l-Hudhayl—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "The *ʿurub* are women who desire their male partners."

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—al-Mubārak b. Faḍāla—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "[It refers to] those who desire their husbands." Q. 56:37

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Idrīs—ʿUthmān b. al-Aswad—ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayd said, "The *ʿurub* are women who desire their husbands."

Abū Kurayb—Mihrān—ʿUthmān b. al-Aswad—ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayd b. ʿUmayr said, concerning *ʿurub*, "The *ʿariba* is a woman who desires her husband. Have you not seen how a man says to his she-camel, 'She truly is an *ʿariba*!'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "[Women] passionately loving their partners."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *ʿuruban*, "They love passionately their partners, with a most intense love."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "The *ʿurub* are female lovers."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *ʿuruban*, "Women acting lovingly towards their partners."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *ʿuruban*, "The *ʿurub* are those whose speech is beautiful."

Ibn al-Barqī—ʿAmr b. Abī Salama said, "Awzāʿī was asked about the meaning of *ʿurub*. He replied, 'I heard Yaḥyā [b. Abī Kathīr] say, "They are passionate lovers."'"

Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Muḥammad b. al-Faraj al-Ṣadafī al-Dimyāṭī—ʿAmr b. Hāshim—Ibn Abī Karīma—Hishām b. Ḥassān—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—his mother—Umm Salama said, "I said, 'O Messenger of God (ṣ), inform me about His statement *ʿuruban atrāban*.' He replied, '*ʿUrub*, meaning passionate female lovers, and *atrāb*, meaning of identical age.'"[1]

Muḥammad b. Ḥafṣ Abū ʿUbayd al-Waṣṣābī—Muḥammad b. Ḥimyar—Thābit b. ʿAjlān—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *uruban*, "*Urub* is yearning (*shawq*)."

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the correct reading of *ʿurub*. Some of the Medinan and Kufan reciters read *ʿuruban*, with *dammas* on the *ʿayn* and *rāʾ*, while some Kufans and Basrans read *ʿurban*, with a *damma* on the *ʿayn* and a *sukūn*[2] on the *rāʾ*, which is the language of Tamīm and Bakr.[3]

Q. 56:37

ṬABARĪ SAID: The reading *ʿurubanⁱ* with two *dammas* is the more likely opinion to be correct, on account of what I mentioned about it being the plural of *ʿarūb*. When a noun is in the form of *faʿūl*, *faʿīl* or *fiʿāl*, the plural form is *fuʿul*, with two *dammas*, whether it is masculine or feminine. It is possible for one to read *ʿurban*,[4] although what I have mentioned is the better of these two readings.

INTERPRETATION OF *all of the same age* (*atrāban*)

[*Atrāban*] means that they are all of the same age.[5] The singular of *atrāb* is *tirb*, just as the plural of *shibh* ("a likeness") is *ashbāh*.[6]

1 This is a continuation of the Umm Salama *ḥadīth* cited in Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.56:36 with the same *isnād*. See, also, Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:211.

2 Ṭabarī, following al-Farrāʾ, uses the term *takhfīf* for *sukūn* here; Dār Hajar, 2:328. Usually, *takhfīf* indicates that a letter does not have a *shadda*.

3 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes the reading of *ʿurub* to Ibn Kathīr, Ibn ʿĀmir and Kisāʾī and the reading of *urb* to Ḥamza, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and al-Aʿmash; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:245. He remarks that both readings are ascribed to Nāfiʿ, Abū ʿAmr and ʿĀṣim. Al-Farrāʾ identifies the reading of *urb* as coming from the tribes of Tamīm and Bakr; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:125.

4 The Dār Hajar edition has *waʾl-takhfīf fiʾl-ʿayn*, instead of *fiʾl-rāʾ*, in this place; 22:328.

5 Al-Farrāʾ actually specifies that they will all be thirty-three years old; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:125. Unfortunately, he does not cite a source for this detail.

6 This is an abridgement of al-Akhfash's explanation of the morphology of *atrāb*; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:702.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥārith—Muḥammad b. Rabīʿa—Salama b. Ṣibṭ—ʿAṭiyya—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The *atrāban* are equals (*mustawiyāt*)."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *atrāban*, "Similar or identical (*amthālan*)".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *atrāban*, "All of the same age".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from [Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda.

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *atrāban*, "The *atrāban* are equals."

Q. 56:38-9

INTERPRETATION OF *For the Companions of the Right*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *We created* these women, who have been described as virgins, for those who will be taken on the right side from the Station of Reckoning (*mawqif al-ḥisāb*) to the Garden.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:39] *A multitude of those of old* [56:40] *And a multitude of those of later times*. [56:41] *And the Companions of the Left—O Companions of the Left!* [56:42] *In scorching wind and scalding water* [56:43] *And shadow of black smoke*, [56:44] *Neither cool nor refreshing*. [56:45] *Lo! how they were effete with luxury* [56:46] *And used to persist in the awful sin*.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Those individuals who will receive the honours that are described in these verses comprise two distinct multitudes or communities or groups: *A multitude of those of old*, meaning a group of people who lived prior to the community of Muḥammad (ṣ); *And a multitude of those of later times*, meaning a group from the community of Muḥammad (ṣ).

The following interpreters have said something similar to what we have just said concerning that, and reports from the Messenger of God (ṣ) have reached us concerning that.[1] An account of the narration concerning that:

1 Following the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:330 (note 1).

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said: **al-Ḥasan**[1] said, "*A multitude of those of old*, from the [ancient] communities, *and a multitude of those of later times*, [meaning from] the community (*umma*) of **Muḥammad** (ṣ)."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *a thulla of those of old*, "A community".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—ʿImrān b. Ḥuṣayn—ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd said,

> We were speaking in the presence of the Messenger of God (ṣ) that night until it grew late and we returned to our families. When we woke up early the next morning, we came to the Messenger of God (ṣ), who said, "The Prophets were presented to me last night by their followers from their communities. Each Prophet would come with a multitude (*thulla*) from his community, or with a group (*iṣāba*)[2] from his community, or with a small party (*nafar*) from his community, or with a [single] man from his community, or all by himself, without anyone from his community. When Moses b. ʿImrān came to me in an immense crowd of Israelites, they made me happy and I said, 'O Lord, who are these people?' He replied, 'This is your brother Moses b. ʿImrān, and the people with him are among the Children of Israel.' I said, 'O Lord, where is my community?' It was said, 'Look to your right,' at which point the low mountains (*zīrāb*) of Mecca were covered with men's faces. I said, 'Who are these people?' It was said, 'These are members of your community.' Then it was said, 'Are you pleased by them?' I replied, 'O Lord, I am pleased!' Then it was said, 'Look to you left,' and the entire horizon was covered with men's faces. I said, 'O Lord, who are these people?' It was said, 'These are members of your community.' Then it was said, 'Are

Q. 56:40

1 This is probably al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, from whom Sufyān al-Thawrī did not hear any reports. Note that the *isnād* merely says *qāla: qāla'l-Ḥasan* ("He said: al-Ḥasan said"), which indicates the absence of direct communication between these two men; Dār Ḥajar, 22:330.

2 An *iṣba* is a group of 10–40 men, horses or birds; Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, 148.

> you pleased by them?' I replied, 'Lord, I am pleased!' Then it was said, 'There are 70,000 members of your community in addition to these [folks] who will enter the Garden without any reckoning.'"
>
> A man from Banū Asad b. Khuzayma named Ukkāsha b. Miḥṣan[1] stood up and said, "O Prophet of God, supplicate your Lord for me to be among these people!" The Prophet said, "O God, make him among them!" Then another man stood up and said, "O Prophet of God, supplicate your Lord for me to be among these people!" [Someone said], "'Ukkāsha has already beaten you to this." Then the Prophet of God (ṣ) said, "May my mother and father be your ransom! If you are able to be among the seventy [thousand], then be among them. If you are incapable of doing this or come up short, then be among the people of the low mountains (*zīrāb*). If you are incapable of doing this or come up short, then be among the people of the horizon. Verily I have seen many people fighting (or mixed up) on that account."[2]
>
> [Ibn Masʿūd] said: Then the believers returned (or we returned) to [discussing] these seventy [thousand] individuals. Concerning their nature, the people present said, "We think they are a group of people who were born into Islam and did not cease acting in accordance with it until they died." Their conversation spread until it reached the Prophet of God (ṣ), who said, "That is not the case. Rather, they are the people who do not seek out magic spells, or brand themselves, or augur bad omens, but instead rely entirely upon God."
>
> [Qatāda said], "It has also been mentioned to us that, on that day, the Prophet of God (ṣ) said, 'I sincerely hope that whoever follows me from my community will account for a quarter of the inhabitants of the Garden.'" [Ibn Masʿūd said]: All of us said, "God is the greatest!" He continued, "Truly I hope that you will be half [of

Q. 56:40

1 Ukkāsha (d. 11/632–633) was a confederate of the Quraysh who converted to Islam prior to the Emigration and fought with the Muslims at the battle of Badr. He was killed in the Wars of Apostasy fighting against Tulayḥa al-Asadī; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1:307–8.

2 The Arabic text expresses uncertainty whether the verb is *yatahartashūn* or *yatahawwashūn*; see the Ḥalabī editor's elucidation, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:190; and also Dār Ḥajar, 22:332.

them]." We all said, "God is the greatest!" Then the Messenger of God (ṣ) recited this verse: *A multitude of those of old, and a multitude of those of later times.* [1]

A similar report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—al-Ḥasan b. Bishr al-Bajalī—al-Ḥakam b. ʿAbd al-Malik—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—ʿImrān b. Ḥuṣayn—ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd said, "We were speaking in the presence of the Messenger of God (ṣ) that night until it grew late (or we talked too much)." [This report differs in the following respects from the previous one]: The (Arabic) wording of "the low mountains of Mecca were covered with men's faces" is slightly different. Likewise, the passage, "Verily I have seen many people mixed up (*yatahawwashūn*)" is followed in this narration by "We said, 'Who are these 70,000?' We agreed that they were people who were born Muslims and died as Muslims and we mentioned this to the Messenger of God (ṣ). He said, 'No, rather they are people who do not brand themselves (*lā yakṭawūn*).' Then he said, 'Truly I hope that you will be a quarter of the inhabitants of the Garden,' and his companions said, 'God is the greatest!' Then he said, 'Truly I hope that you are a third of the inhabitants of the Garden,' and his companions said, 'God is the greatest!' Then he said, 'Truly I hope that you are one half of the inhabitants of the Garden' and recited, *A multitude of those of old, and a multitude of those of later times.*"

Q. 56:40

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAwf—ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Hārith said, "All of them are in the Garden."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said that it reached him that the Prophet (ṣ) said, "Will you be pleased with being one quarter of the inhabitants of the Garden?" [His companions] replied yes. He said, "Will you be pleased with being one-third of the inhabitants of the Garden?" They replied yes. He said, "By the One in Whose hand lies my soul! I hope that you will be half of the inhabitants of the Garden." Then he recited, *A multitude of those of old, and a multitude of those of later times.*

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Budayl—Kaʿb said, "The inhabitants of the Garden fill 120 rows, eighty of which are from this [Muslim] community."

1 According to Suyūṭī, the final paragraph of this long *hadith* is also found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh, and books by al-Ḥasan b. Sufyān and Ibn ʿAsākir; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:227. He mentions a long *hadith* in one of the compilations of Tabarānī which is similar to this one, although it appears that Ṭabarī may have preserved a unique report here in his commentary.

TABARĪ SAID: There are two ways of reading *thulla* in the nominative case. One of them is that it is [the subject of] a new sentence. The other way is to understand the passage as saying: *For the Companions of the Right*, there are two multitudes (*thullatān*): *A multitude of those of old.* [1]

It has been related on the authority of the Prophet (ṣ), in an unsound [2] narration, that he said, "Both of the multitudes [in these verses] are from my [Muslim] community." [3]

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abān b. Abī ʿAyyāsh—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *A multitude of those of old, and a multitude of those of later times*: the Prophet (ṣ) said, "Both of them are from my community." [4]

INTERPRETATION OF *And the Companions of the Left—O Companions of the Left!*

In order to instill wonder in His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) about the inhabitants of Hellfire, God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*And the Companions of the Left*, who are taken on the left side from the Station of Reckoning to Hellfire. *O Companions of the Left!* What [horrors] are in store for them! What [misery] has been prepared for them!" We have been informed of this by:

Q. 56:41–2

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the Companions of the Left—O Companions of the Left!*, "In other words, what [horrors] are in store for them! What [misery] has been prepared for them!"

INTERPRETATION OF *In scorching wind and scalding water*

He says: They are in the *scorching wind* (*samūm*) of Gehenna and its *scalding water*.

1 Since the implied expression of "two multitudes" (*thullatān*) is indefinite, the *thulla* following it would be in the nominative case according to the rules of Arabic syntax. These two explanations are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:126.

2 The later manuscripts and earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* identify this narration as being sound; see Dār Hajar, 22:333 (note 4).

3 This *hadith*, which has a slightly different wording from the narration which follows, is found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh, and the *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq; Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:227.

4 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is also found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh, and books by Firyābī and Ibn ʿAdī with a "weak" *isnād*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:227. Note that Abān b. Abī ʿAyyāsh, who appears in this *isnād*, is almost universally considered a "rejected (*matrūk*)" transmitter of *hadith*; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:93–5.

INTERPRETATION OF *And shadow of black smoke (min yaḥmūm)*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: "And *shadow* from intensely black smoke." The Arabs call everything they describe as intensely black as *aswad yaḥmūm*.[1]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Abī'l-Shawārib—ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Ziyād—Sulaymān al-Shaybānī—Yazīd b. al-Aṣamm said, "I heard Ibn ʿAbbās say, concerning *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, 'It is the shadow of smoke.'"

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd al-Muḥāribī—Qabīṣa b. Layth—Shaybānī—Yazīd b. al-Aṣamm—Ibn ʿAbbās; and from Abū Kurayb—Ibn Idrīs—Shaybānī—Yazīd b. al-Aṣamm—Ibn ʿAbbās.

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Shaybānī—Yazīd b. al-Aṣamm—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "It is smoke." Q. 56:43

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Ibrāhīm b. Ṭahmān—Simāk b. Ḥarb—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "Smoke".

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "Of the smoke of Gehenna".[2]

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning this verse *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "smoke".

Abū Kurayb—ʿAththam—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Mālik said, concerning His statement *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "The smoke of Gehenna".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Saʿīd b. Yaḥyā al-Umawī—Ibn al-Mubārak—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Mālik.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "smoke".

Ibn Ḥumayd said, "A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid

1 This is very similar to Abū ʿUbayda's gloss on *yaḥmūm*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:251.

2 Following the reading of *jahannama* in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:335 (note 2).

said, concerning His statement *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "Of smoke of Gehenna".[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Shaybānī—Yazīd b. al-Aṣamm—Ibn ʿAbbās; and from Manṣūr—Mujāhid; both Ibn Abbās and Mujāhid said, concerning *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "smoke".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "Of smoke".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "We were informed that this is the shadow of smoke."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And shadow of yaḥmūm*, "This is a shadow of smoke from the smoke of Gehenna, according to one or more scholars."

INTERPRETATION OF *Neither cool nor refreshing* Q. 56:44

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: This shadow will not be *cool*, like the coolness of the shadow of everything else; rather, it will be hot, because it consists of smoke from the blaze of Gehenna. Nor will it be *refreshing*, because it will be painful for whoever seeks shade.

The Arabs follow every descriptor that is a negation of a praiseworthy quality with the negation of *karam* (i.e. *lā karīm*). For example, they say, "This food is neither tasty nor refreshing (*wa-lā karīm*)"; or "This meat is neither fatty nor refreshing"; or "This house is neither clean nor refreshing."[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Bazīʿ—al-Naḍr—Juwaybir—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Neither cool nor refreshing*, "Every drink that is not sweet is also not refreshing (*karīm*)."

Qatāda said, concerning that, what has been narrated to us by Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Neither cool nor refreshing*, "The area [under the shadow] is neither a cool place to alight, nor refreshing to view."

1 Following the editors of the Dār Hajar edition; 22:336 (note 3). The first three reports in this section that identify *yaḥmūm* as "smoke of Gehenna (*dukhān jahannama*)" read "steam from boiling water (*dukhān ḥamim*)" in the later manuscripts and earlier print editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

2 This passage is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:127.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! how they were effete with luxury* (*mutrafīn*)

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "These people, who were described as *the Companions of the Left*, used to be *mutrafūn*, which means 'indulging in pleasures (*munaʿʿimīn*)', prior to their experience of the punishment of God, which never afflicted them [when they were] in the temporal world," as I have been informed by:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Lo! how they were mutrafīn*, "Indulging in pleasures".

INTERPRETATION OF *And used to persist* (*yuṣirrūn*) *in the awful sin* (*ḥinth*).

God (Majestic is His praise) says: They used to persist (*yuqīmūn*) in the awful sin (*dhanb*).

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that: Q. 56:45-6

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *yuṣirrūn*, "They became accustomed to [doing this]."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *yuṣirrūn in the awful sin*, "They follow it (*yadhhabūn*), or they became accustomed to [doing this]."[1]

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And used to yuṣirrūn*, "They neither repented nor seek forgiveness. The Arabs use the expression *iṣrār ʿalā'l-dhanb* to mean 'persistently offending and failing to cease from so doing.'"

His statement *in the hinth al-ʿaẓīm* means "in the awful sin", which is the association of partners with God (*al-shirk bi'llāh*).[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *in the awful hinth*, "In the sin".

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Abū Tumayla—ʿUbayd b. Sulaymān—

1 Following the Dār Hajar editors' reading of the *isnād* and text of this report; 22:338 (notes 3, 4)
2 This is also the opinion voiced by al-Farrāʾ; *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:127.

al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *the awful sin*, "The association of partners with God."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *in the awful sin*, "In other words, the association of partners with God."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *the awful ḥinth*, "The sin".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning *And used to persist in the awful hinth*, "The *awful ḥinth* is the awful sin, and that great sin is the association of partners with God. These folks neither repent from this act nor seek forgiveness for it."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And used to persist in the awful ḥinth*, "It is the association of partners with God."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ'—Mujāhid said, concerning *in the awful ḥinth*, "The awful sin". Q. 56:46-50

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:47] *And they used to say, When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then be raised again,* [56:48] *And also our forefathers?* [56:49] *Say (to them, O Muḥammad): Lo! those of old and those of later times* [56:50] *Will all be brought together on an appointed day.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And they used to say*, on account of their rejection of the Resurrection and denial of God's power to revive His creation after its death, "When we are *dust and bone* powder in our graves, after our deaths, *shall we then be raised again* alive, as we were prior to our deaths? *And also our forefathers* who lived before us, among the first generations?" God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: They say, "Will we *be raised again, and also* will *our forefathers* be raised again, who came prior to them, and are their predecessors?"[2] God says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): Say to them, O Muḥammad, "*Lo! those of old* among your forefathers *and those of later times* among you and others *will all be brought together on an appointed day*." That day is Resurrection Day.

1 Following the *isnād* in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:340 (note 3).
2 This sentence is missing from earlier print editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; Dār Hajar, 22:340 (note 4)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56.51] *Then lo! you, who are astray, the deniers,* [56.52] *Will eat of a tree called Zaqqūm* [56.53] *And will fill your bellies with it*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to the Companions of the Left: *Then lo! you, who are astray* from the path of guidance, *the deniers* of God's threat and promise,[1] *will eat of a tree called Zaqqūm.*

INTERPRETATION OF *And will fill your bellies with it*

He says: Their bellies *will be filled* with the tree of Zaqqūm.

The experts of Arabic grammar disagreed over the reason why "tree" is referred to with a feminine pronoun in the verse *And will fill your bellies with it* (*minhā*). One of the Basran grammarians[2] said: It was said *And will fill your bellies with it* (*minhā*), meaning "with the tree (*shajar*)", and *And thereon* (*ʿalayhi*) *you will drink* [in the following verse] because the word *shajar* (tree/trees) can be either feminine or masculine. It is in the feminine when it bears the meaning *shajara*, because the word *shajara* indicates a collectivity [of trees, even though it means a singular "tree"]. The Arabs say "A bitter tree (*shajaratun murratun*) with foul herbs grew here on account of us," when they mean "a group of trees".

Q. 56:51-3

One of the Kufan grammarians[3] said that [the clauses] *will eat of a shajar called Zaqqūm* and the [irregular] reading of Ibn Masʿūd, *will eat of a shajaratin called Zaqqūm*, are identical. According to him, the words *shajar* and *shajara* mean the same thing, because if you were to say "I took a sheep (*shāʾ*)" and intended a single sheep or multiple sheep, you would utter the identical expression and that would be permissible (grammatically). Therefore, *and will fill your bellies with it* (*minhā*) refers back to the word *shajar*, and if one had said *and will fill your bellies with it* (*minhu*), it would also have been correct, even if the preceding word *shajara* had not been put in the masculine form. [This is because the object pronoun *hu* in] *minhu* would refer back to [the masculine word] *shajar*, and then *shajar* would be put in the feminine form, resulting in *minhā*, which is a reference to the tree (*shajar*). The word *shajar* can be made either masculine or feminine,

1 God's threat (*waʿīd*) and promise (*waʿd*) are generally understood to mean Hell and Heaven, respectively.
2 This opinion is found in al-Akhfash, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:702. Note that this sentence is missing from earlier editions of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*; Dār Hajar, 22:341 (note 2).
3 This opinion is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:127.

like the word *tamr* ("date"),[1] which can be made masculine or feminine.

TABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in our estimation, is the second one, namely, that His statement *and will fill your bellies with it* (*minhā*) refers to the *shajar* and is feminine on account of its meaning, and the verse *and thereon* (*ʿalayhi*) *you will drink* uses a masculine pronoun on account of the actual [masculine] word (*lafẓ*) *shajar*.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:54] *And thereon you will drink of boiling water,* [56:55] *Drinking even as the thirsty camels drink.* [56:56] *This will be their welcome on the Day of Reckoning.* [56:57] *We created you. Will you not then admit the truth?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "The Companions of the Left Hand will be drinking *from a tree called Zaqqūm*, which, when they drink from it, fills their bellies with the hottest possible boiling water." It has also been alleged: The meaning of *And thereon you will drink* is: You will drink [boiling water] on top of the food from the tree of Zaqqūm.[2]

Q. 56:54-5

INTERPRETATION OF *Drinking even as the thirsty camels drink*

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the correct reading of that. Most of the Medinan and Kufan reciters read *shurb al-hīm* with a *ḍamma* on the *shīn*. Some Meccan, Basran and Syrian reciters read *sharb al-hīm*, [with a *fatḥa* on it],[3] as a permutation [of *shurb*], because at Minā the Prophet (ṣ) said, "These are days of eating and drinking (*sharb*)."[4]

1 The critical edition of al-Farrāʾ's *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* has *thamar* ("fruit") instead of *tamr*; 3:127.
2 This interpretation is suggested in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:127. Note that the word *akl* ("food") is masculine, so the previously discussed problem of the inconsistent pronouns for *shajar* ("tree") is alleviated by this interpretation.
3 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes this reading to Ibn Kathīr, Ibn ʿĀmir, Abū ʿAmr, Kisāʾī, al-Aʿraj, Ibn al-Musayyab, Shuʿayb b. al-Ḥabḥāb, Mālik b. Dīnār and Ibn Jurayj; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:247. He remarks that the Medinans and remaining "Seven Reciters" (Nāfiʿ, ʿĀṣim, Ḥamza) all read *shurb*.
4 This anecdote, including the *ḥadīth*, is told in far richer detail in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:127–8. A *ḥadīth* with this sentence is found in all Six canonical Sunni collections except for Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. All of the modern printed editions I consulted have *shurb* instead of *sharb*, except for one narration in Ibn Māja's *Sunan*; see Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*Kitāb al-ṣiyām: bāb 23: taḥrīm ṣawm ayyām al-tashrīq*); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-ṣawm: bāb 49: ṣiyām ayyām al-tashrīq*); Tirmidhī, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-ṣawm: bāb 59: mā jāʾa fī karāhiyat al-ṣawm fī ayyām al-tashrīq*); Nasāʾī, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-manāsik: bāb 195: al-nahy ʿan ṣawm yawm ʿArafa*); Ibn Māja, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-ṣiyām: bāb 35: mā jāʾa fīl-nahy ʿan ṣiyām ayyām al-tashrīq*).

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that, in our estimation, is that they are two [sound] readings, each of which is recited by the scholars among the Qur'ān reciters, and are close in meaning, so the reciter will be correct reading either one. The case of *shurb* and *sharb* is equivalent to *ḍa'f* and *du'f* ("weakness, defect"), as both words can be articulated with either a *fatha* or a *damma*.

As for the word *him*,[1] it is the plural of *ahyam*, the feminine of which is *haymā'*. The *him* are camels who are afflicted with an illness that prevents them from quenching their thirst, regardless of how much water they drink. Some Arabs say *hā'im* [for the masculine] and *hā'ima* for the feminine, and *him* for the plural, just as they say *ʿā'iṭ* [singular]/*ʿuyyaṭ* [plural][2] and *hā'il*/*huwwal*.[3]

It also has been alleged that *him* means "sand", meaning that the inhabitants of Hell drink boiling water the same way sand consumes water.

❁

OPINION: An account of those who said: What is meant by ***him*** is thirsty camels:

Q. 56:55 ❁

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *shurba'l-him*, "The drinking of thirsty camels."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Drinking even as the him drink*, "Parched camels".

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—ʿImrān b. Ḥudayr—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *Drinking even as the him drink*, "Ill camels who suck up water without quenching their thirst."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Yazīd—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *Drinking even as the him drink*, "Camels who are seized by thirst and drink until they die."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Khuṣayf—ʿIkrima said, concerning *Drinking even as the him drink*, "They are camels who are seized by thirst."

1 This entire explanation of *him*, including the sentence regarding sand, is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:128.

2 An *'a'it* is "a she-camel not conceiving in the first year after having been covered [by the stallion]"; Lane, "-*w-t*".

3 A *hā'il* is "a she-camel who does not conceive or become pregnant during a year, or two years, or some years"; Lane, "*h-w-l*".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]'—Ibn 'Abbās said, "They are thirsty camels."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *shurba'l-him*, "Camels that cannot quench their thirst."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Drinking even as the him drink*, "The *him* are thirsty camels whose thirst is not quenched from drinking, because they are afflicted by a disease called *huyām*."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Drinking even as the him drink*, "A disease that afflicts camels from which they cannot quench their thirst."

❁ Q. 56:55-7 ❁

OPINION: An account of those who said: *Him* is sand:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *Drinking even as the him drink*, "Coarse sand (*sihla*)".

INTERPRETATION OF *This will be their welcome on the Day of Reckoning*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, all *this*, which I have just described for you, about these deniers who are astray and will eat from the Tree of Zaqqūm and drink from boiling water, *will be their welcome* from their Lord *on the Day of Dīn*. [The Day of *Dīn*] is the day on which God compensates or requites (*yadīn*) His servants.[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *We created you. Will you not then admit the truth?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to the Quraysh disbelievers and deniers of the Resurrection: O humanity, *We created you* when you were nothing. We brought you into existence as humans, so do you not then *admit the truth* of the One Who did that when it is said to you, "He will resurrect you, after your deaths and decomposition in your graves, in the forms you were prior to your deaths?"

1 Sufyān al-Thawrī could not have heard this report directly from Ibn 'Abbās, so it is clear that the names of at least two informants are missing from this *isnād*.

2 For Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.1:4, see volume 1.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:58] Have you seen that which you emit? [56:59] Do you create it or are We the Creator? [56:60] We mete out death among you, and We are not to be outrun, [56:61] That We may transfigure you and make you what you know not.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to these deniers of the Resurrection: O deniers of God's power to revive you after your deaths, *Have you seen* the semen *which you emit* into the wombs of your women?[1] *Do you create* the semen[2] *or are We the Creator?*

INTERPRETATION OF *We mete out death among you*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *We mete out death among you*. We hasten it to some of you and delay it for others among you, until an appointed time.

Q. 56:58-61

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *We mete out death among you*, "Those whose death has been postponed and those whose death has been quickened."

INTERPRETATION OF *and We are not to be outrun that We may transfigure you*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *and We are not to be outrun* regarding your souls and lifespans, since they are decided (*fa-mufātūn*) by Us in accordance with the command by which We have determined their life and death. Rather, there is nothing [the soul can do] to advance or postpone the lifespan [We have decreed].[3]

INTERPRETATION OF *That We may transfigure you*

He says: *That We may transfigure you* after your death and bring forth others of your type.

INTERPRETATION OF *and make you what you know not*

1 This explanation is also found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:128.
2 Following the reading of *nuf* in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:345.
3 Following the reconstruction of this passage by the editors of the Dār Hajar edition; see 22:346.

He says: And transfigure you from what you know of yourselves to *what you know not* of their forms.[4]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And make you*, "Into whichever creation We will."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:62] And verily you know the first creation. Why, then, do you not reflect? [56:63] Have you seen that which you cultivate? [56:64] Is it you who grow it, or are We the Grower?

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *verily you know* the first creation, whose existence We brought into being when nothing else existed.

Q. 56:62

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *the first creation*, "When you were nothing."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And verily you know the first creation*, "It means the creation of Adam. You never asked any person except that he informed you that God created Adam from clay."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And verily you know the first creation*, "It is the creation of Adam."

Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ḥarashī[2]—Jaʿfar b. Sulaymān said, "I heard Abū Imrān al-Jawnī recite the verse, *And verily you know the first creation*, and say, 'This is the creation of Adam.'"

4 Most of this sentence is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:251.
2 Following Ibn Hajar's reading of "al-Ḥarashī" instead of the Halabī edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, which has "al-H-r-s-y"; *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 6:79–80. This is also confirmed by the Dār Hajar edition; 22:347.

INTERPRETATION OF *Why, then, do you not reflect?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, do *you not reflect* so that you grasp that there is nothing to prevent the One Who created you the first time, when you were nothing, from bringing you back to life after your deaths and annihilation, in the form in which you were prior to your death, when you were alive?[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *Have you seen that which you cultivate? Is it you who grow it, or are We the Grower?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *have you seen* the fields *which you cultivate? Is it you who grow it, or are We the Grower?* He says: Do you make it become crops or do We make this happen?

I have been informed by Aḥmad b. al-Walīd al-Qurashī—Muslim b. Abī Muslim al-Jarmī[2]—Makhlad b. al-Ḥusayn—Hishām—Muḥammad [b. Sīrīn]—Abū Hurayra said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Do not say, 'I grew it.' Instead, say, 'I cultivated.'" Abū Hurayra said, "Have you not heard God's speech, *Have you seen that which you cultivate? Is it you who grow it, or are We the Grower?*"[3]

Q. 56:62–5

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:65] *If We willed, We verily could make it chaff, then would you cease not to marvel,* [56:66] *(Exclaiming), Lo! we are punished!*
[56:67] *Nay, but we are deprived!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *If We willed*, We could make those crops which We grew into *ḥutām*, meaning "chaff," which is useful neither as feed nor as food.

INTERPRETATION OF *then would you cease not to marvel*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *[fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn]*.

1 The Dār Ḥajar edition fills a lacuna in this passage found in the earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:348.

2 Reading "al-Jarmī" instead of the printed "al-Ḥ-r-m-y" in the Ḥalabī edition. This transmitter is probably Muslim b. Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jarmī, whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim identifies as a frontier warrior who "killed 100,000 Byzantines" and narrated from Makhlad b. Ḥusayn, who appears in this *isnād*; *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa'l-ta'dīl*, 8:188. This vocalization is supported by the Dār Ḥajar edition, as is the reading of Hishām instead of Hāshim in this *isnād*; 22:348.

3 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Musnad* of Bazzār, the Qur'ānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh and books by Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:230. He mentions that Bayhaqī evaluates it as "weak".

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: You would not cease deeming strange (*tata'jjabūn*) what had befallen your crops, namely their burning and destruction.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn*, "You would deem [it] strange."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn*, "You would deem [it] strange."

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—Qatāda said, concerning *fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn*, "You would deem [it] strange."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: You would not cease blaming one another for your neglect of obeying your Lord, until you received what you received, regarding the destruction of your crops. Q. 56:65

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Yazīd—'Ikrima said, concerning His statement *fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn*, "You would blame each other."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Simāk b. Ḥarb al-Bakrī—'Ikrima said, concerning *fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn*, "You would blame each other."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: You would not cease regretting the acts in disobedience of God you had done previously, which made His punishment incumbent upon you, to the point that you received what you did regarding your crops.

An account of those who said that:

Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn 'Ulayya—Abū Rajā'—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn*, "You would be regretting [your acts]."

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *fa-ẓaltum tafakkahūn*, "You would be regretting [your acts]."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: You would not cease being distressed [at what happened].[1]

1 Following the superior Dār Ḥajar reading of *tafajja'ūn* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *ta'ajjabūn*; 22:350.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *fa-zaltum tafakkahūn*, "You became distressed when [God] did what He did to your crops." [Ibn Zayd] recited God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *Lo! we are laden with debt! Nay, but we are deprived!* Then he recited God's statement, *And when they returned to their own folk, they returned jesting* (Q.83:31) and said, "These folks were in bliss." Then he recited God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *How many were the gardens and the springs that they left behind, and the fields and the dignified sites, and pleasant things wherein they took delight!* (Q.44:25–27).[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion which is most likely to be correct is for one to say: The meaning of *fa-zaltum* [*tafakkahūn*] is: "You would continue deeming strange what befell your crops."[2] The origin of this word comes from "the wonder (*tafakkuh*) of a statement, when a man tells something to another man that evokes the sense of wonder in him and distracts him." Q. 56:56 So this is how that is. It is as if the meaning of this passage were: You would continue deeming it strange, some of you causing wonder in others, by what happened to [your crops.]

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! we are punished!*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of [*innā la-mughramūn*].

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: Verily we are infatuated with ourselves!

An account of those who said that:

Mūsā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Masrūqī—Zayd b. al-Ḥubāb—al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqid—Yazīd al-Naḥwī—ʿIkrima said, concerning God's statement (Exalted is His remembrance) *innā la-mughramūn*, "Verily we are infatuated with ourselves."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *innā la-mughramūn*, "We are infatuated with ourselves."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Verily we are punished!

1 The Halabī edition reads, "Then he recited *fa-akhrajnāhum min jannāt wa-ʿuyūn* (Q.26:57) until *wherein they took delight* (Q.44:27). Since the discussion here is over the meaning of *tafakkahūn*, I am assuming that the initial verse should have been *kam tarakū min jannāt wa-ʿuyūn* (Q.44:25). The editors of the Dār Hajar edition concur with my emendation; 22:351. For Ṭabarī's commentary on this passage from Sūrat al-Dukhān, see above.

2 This is very close to al-Farrāʾ's preferred opinion concerning this verse; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:128.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *innā la-mughramūn*, "We are punished."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Verily we have been exposed to a calamity!

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *innā la-mughramūn*, "We have been exposed to a calamity."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The most likely opinion to be correct is for one to say: Its meaning is: "Verily we are punished",[1] because the word *gharām* is used by the Arabs to mean "punishment", as can be seen from the following verse by al-Aʿshā: Q. 56:56–7

in yuʾāqib yakun gharāman wa-in
yuʿti jazīlan fa-innahu lā yubāli

If one retaliates, it becomes a debt; and if one gives
generously, he has no worries.

By his statement "it becomes a debt", the poet means "it becomes a punishment."

There is an ellipsis that is sufficiently indicated by the context of this passage, namely, "*Then would you cease not to marvel*, exclaiming, *Lo! we are punished!*" The word "exclaiming" is dropped from the passage, according to what we described.

INTERPRETATION OF *Nay, but we are deprived!*

By that He means that they are saying: Our crops were not destroyed for the purpose of punishing us; rather, we are a people who are *maḥrūmūn*, meaning they are prevented or prohibited (*maḥdūdūn*) and do not have any good fortune (*jadd*).[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

1 This is also the opinion of both Abū ʿUbayda and al-Farrāʾ; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:251; and *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:129. Interestingly, Ṭabarī does not cite the verse of poetry found in *Majāz al-Qurʾān* in support of this interpretation.

2 Following the reading of the Dār Hajar edition; 22:353.

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Nay, but we are maḥrūmūn!*, "We are prevented or prohibited."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Nay, but we are maḥrūmūn!*, "Rather, we have been punished and deprived."[1]

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Nay, but we are maḥrūmūn!*, "In other words, we have been deprived of our sustenance."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

Q. 56:68–9

[56:68] *Have you observed the water which you drink?* [56:69] *Is it you who sent it down from the raincloud, or are We the sender?* [56:70] *If We willed We verily could make it salty.*[2] *Why, then, give you not thanks?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *Have you observed the water which you drink? Is it you who sent it down from* the clouds above you to the surface of the earth, *or are We the sender* of it to you?

The following interpreters said something similar to what we just said concerning the meaning of His statement *muzn* ("raincloud"). An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *from the muzn*, "The clouds".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Is it you who sent it down from the muzn*, "From the clouds".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Is it you who sent it down from the muzn*, "*Muzn* is the name for the clouds. *You who sent it down from the muzn*: the clouds."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd

1 This report is missing from the later manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:353.
2 This is Ṭabarī's interpretation of the Arabic word *ujāj*. Pickthall, Arberry and Abdel Haleem render it as "bitter", while Asad translates it as "salty and bitter".

al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Is it you who sent it down from the muzn*, "The *muzn* are the sky and clouds."

INTERPRETATION OF *If We willed We verily could make it salty*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*If We willed We verily could make* that water We sent down to you from *the raincloud salty*, which is *ujāj*." Water that is *ujāj* is intensely salty.[1] He says: "*If We willed*, We could have done that with [rain water], making it useless for you to drink or use to cultivate crops."

INTERPERTATION OF *Why, then, give you not thanks?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Will you not give thanks to your Lord for giving you the delicious water He provides for you to drink, use for beneficial purposes, live a good life, and for His decision not to make it salty and useless for you?

Q. 56:70–3

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56.71] *Have you observed the fire which you strike out;* [56.72] *Was it you who made the tree thereof to grow, or were We the grower?* [56.73] *We, even We, appointed it a memorial and a comfort for the dwellers in the wilderness.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *have you observed the fire which* you extract[2] from your flint? *Was it you who made the tree thereof to grow*? He says: Did you bring into existence this tree and create its root, *or were We the grower*? He says: Or did We create this and bring it into existence?

INTERPRETATION OF *We, even We, appointed it a memorial*

He says: *We, even We, appointed* the fire *a memorial* (*tadhkira*) for you, so that by it you might remember the fire of Gehenna and take heed and be warned.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashy-

1 The gloss of *ujāj* as "intensely salty" is found in both Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān* (2:252) and al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān* (3:129).
2 Abū ʿUbayda also glosses *tūrūn* as *tastakhrijūn* ("you extract"); *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:252.

ab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *tadhkira*, "A reminder of the Greatest Fire [in Hell]."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Have you observed the fire which you strike out? Was it you who made the tree thereof to grow, or were We the grower? We, even We, appointed it a memorial*, "A memorial to the Greatest Fire. It has been mentioned to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) said, 'Your fire, which you burn, is one-seventieth of the fire of Gehenna.' [His Companions] said, 'O Prophet of God, truly this [fire] is sufficient!' He said, '[The fire] has been struck with water twice, in order for the Children of Adam to seek benefits from it and draw close to it.'"[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Jābir—Mujāhid said, concerning *a memorial*, "To the Greatest Fire, which is in the Hereafter."

Q. 56:73

INTERPRETATION OF *and a comfort for the dwellers in the wilderness*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *al-muqwīn* ("dwellers in the wilderness"):

OPINION: Some of them said: They are travellers.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *li'l-muqwīn*, "For travellers."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *and a comfort for the muqwīn*, "It means travellers".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *and a comfort for the muqwīn*, "For the exhausted one, travelling".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *for the muqwīn*, "For travellers".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *and a comfort for the muqwīn*, "For travellers".

1 According to Suyūṭī, in his commentary on Q.2:24, a *ḥadīth* very similar to this one is transmitted on the authority of Anas in the *Sunan* of Ibn Māja and the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. In addition, he mentions a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Hurayra, which also states that the fire used by humanity is one-seventieth of the fire of Gehenna, and is found in the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, and Bayhaqī's *al-Baʿth*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 1:78.

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by *muqwīn* is: Those who seek enjoyment from it.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *and a comfort for the muqwīn*, "For those who seek enjoyment; in other words, for all humanity."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Jābir—Mujāhid said, concerning *and a comfort for the muqwīn*, "For those who seek enjoyment, both the traveller and the person at home."

Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabīb al-Shahīd—ʿAttāb b. Bishr—Khuṣayf said, concerning His statement *and a comfort for the muqwīn*, "For all creation".

Q. 56:73

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is hungry people.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *and a comfort for the muqwīn*, "The *muqwī* is a hungry person. The Arabs say '*aqwaytu* since this time or that', meaning 'I did not eat anything since this time or that'."[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is that one says: What is meant by [*muqwī*] is a traveller who lacks provisions and is destitute.

The root of this word is their expression *aqwat al-dāru*, which [the Arabs] use when a house is vacant. For example, the poet said,[2]

aqwā wa-aqfara min nuʿmin wa-ghayyarahā
hūju'l-riyāḥi bi-hābi'l-turbi mawwāri

[The house] became vacant without Nuʿm; the violent winds
Of blasting dust, blowing to and fro, defaced it.

The word *aqwā* in this poem means "devoid of its inhabitants". In other contexts, the word *muqwī* can mean "possessor of a strong horse" or "possessor of much wealth".

1 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *mundh* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *min*; 22:358.
2 According to the editors of the Ḥalabī edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, this verse comes from an ode by al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī; *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 27:202.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:74] *Therefore, (O Muḥammad), praise the Name of your Lord, the Tremendous.* [56:75] *Nay, I swear by the setting places of the stars* [56:76] *And lo! that verily is a tremendous oath, if you but knew* [56:77] *That (this) is indeed a noble Qur'ān* [56:78] *In a Book kept guarded* [56:79] *Which none touches save the purified,* [56:80] *A revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *therefore praise* the remembrance and invocation *of your Lord, the Tremendous.*

INTERPRETATION OF *Nay, I swear by the setting places of the stars*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *lā uqsimu* ("Nay, I swear") *by the setting places of the stars.*[1]

Q. 56:74-5

Some of them said: What is meant by His statement *fa-lā uqsimu* is "I swear".

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Jurayj—al-Ḥasan b. Muslim—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *fa-lā uqsimu*, "I swear".

One of the experts of Arabic grammar[2] said: The meaning of His statement *fa-lā* is: The situation is not how you say it is. Then the oath is initiated afterwards, by saying "I swear".

The interpreters also disagreed over the meaning of *by the setting places of the stars* (*mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm*).

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: I swear by the revealed instalments (*manāzil*) of the Qur'ān. They said: The Qur'ān was sent down to the Messenger of God (ṣ) in differentiated instalments (*nujūman mutafarriqa*).

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Ḥuṣayn—Ḥakīm b. Jubayr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "On the Night of Power,[3] the

1 The issue Ṭabarī is addressing is that the phrase *lā uqsimu* literally means "I do/will not swear." This expression occurs again, below, in his commentary on Sūrat al-Qiyāma (75).

2 This is al-Farrāʾ's opinion, which he explains in depth, in his commentary on Q.75:1; see *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:207.

3 The Night of Power (*laylatu'l-qadr*) is a very special night during the last ten days of Ramadan (according to the dominant scholarly position), which the Qur'ān describes as *better than 1,000 months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, with all decrees*; see Q.97:2–3.

Qur'ān came down from the highest heaven to the nearest heaven in a single unit, then it was divided [into instalments] over the following years." Ibn ʿAbbās recited this verse, *I swear by the mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm*, and said, "It came down in differentiated [instalments]."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Yazīd—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *I swear by the mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm*, "God sent down the Qur'ān in instalments of three, four or five verses at a time."

Ibn Abd al-Aʿlā—al-Muʿtamir [b. Sulaymān al-Taymī]—his father—Ikrima said, "The Qur'ān came down as a single unit, then it was made into instalments (*fa-wuḍiʿa bi-mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm*), so the Angel Gabriel began to bring a *sūra* at a time. Truly, it came down as a single unit on the Night of Power."

Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Masʿūdī—my father—his father—his grandfather—al-Aʿmash—Mujāhid said, concerning *I swear by the mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm*, "They are the unambiguous [verses] (*muḥkam*) of the Qur'ān."

Q. 56:75

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *I swear by the mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm, and lo! that verily is a tremendous oath, if you but knew*, "By the abode (*mustaqarr*) of the Book—its beginning and its end!"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: I swear by the setting places (*masāqiṭ*) of the stars.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *by the mawāqiʿi of the stars*, "In the heaven. One says, 'The rising and setting places [of these stars].'"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *I swear by the mawāqiʿi of the stars*, "In other words, their setting places."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: [I swear] by the mansions (*manāzil*) of the stars.

An account of those who said that:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *I swear by the mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm*, "By the mansions of the stars."

OPINION: Others say that said: Rather, the meaning of that is the scattering of the stars at the arrival of the Last Hour.[1]

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *I swear by the mawāqiʿi-l-nujūm*, "Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said that this verse refers to the scattering of the stars on Resurrection Day."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is for one to say: The meaning of that is: I swear by the setting places of the stars in the sky,[2] because the word *mawāqiʿ* is the plural of *mawqiʿ*, which is the nominal form *mafʿil* of the verb *waqaʿa/yaqaʿu/mawqiʿ*. Its preponderant meaning and its most apparent interpretation is what we have said concerning that. For that reason, we said: This is the superior meaning of it.

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of this verse. Most of the Kufans read it in the singular as *mawqiʿ*, while most Medinans, Basrans and some Kufans read it in the plural form as *mawāqiʿ*.[3]

Q. 56:76-7

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that is that both readings are well-attested and have the same meaning, so the reciter will be correct reading either one of them.

INTERPRETATION OF *And lo! that verily is a tremendous oath, if you but knew*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And lo!* this *oath*, by which I have sworn, is, *if you but knew* its nature and magnitude, a *tremendous* oath.

This is a case of inversion, so the implied meaning is *wa'innahu la-qasamun ʿaẓīmun law taʿlamūn ʿizamahu* [instead of the written *wa'innahu la-qasamun law taʿlamūn ʿaẓīmun*].

INTERPRETATION OF *That (this) is indeed a noble Qur'ān*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *I swear by the setting-places of the stars that* this Qur'ān *is indeed a noble Qur'ān.*

The pronoun *hu* in His statement *innahu* refers to the Qur'ān.

1 The verb Ṭabarī uses here is *intathara*, which also appears in the verse, *When the stars (kawākib) are scattered* (82:2).

2 This is nearly identical with Abū ʿUbayda's gloss on *mawāqiʿ*; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:252.

3 Al-Farrā' also mentions Ibn Masʿūd's reading of *mawqiʿ* in the singular; *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:129. Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes the reading of *mawqiʿ* in the singular to ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Masʿūd, the Kufans, Ḥamza and Kisā'ī; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:250–1. He reports that everyone else read it in the plural.

INTERPRETATION OF *In a Book kept guarded*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: [The Qur'ān] is with God in a protected Book. Nothing harmful—dusty or otherwise—*touches* it.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā—Sharīk—Ḥakīm—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Which none touches save the purified*, "The Book which is in the heavens."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *In a Book kept guarded*, "The Qur'ān is in His guarded Book, which neither soil nor dust *touches*."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *In a Book kept guarded*, "It is with the Lord of the Worlds."[1] Q. 56:78-9

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement *In a Book kept guarded*, "It is a Book *which none touches save the purified*. [Some of the Meccans] claimed that evil spirits (*shayāṭīn*) brought down [the Qur'ān] to Muḥammad, so God informed them that [evil spirits] do not have the power or capacity to do that. It does not suit their ends to send down this [Book] when there is a barrier between it and them." He then recited God's statement, *It behooves them not, nor is it in their power; Lo! verily they are banished from the hearing* (Q.26:211-12).

Ibn Humayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—ʿUbayd Allāh, meaning al-ʿAtakī—Jābir b. Zayd and Abū Nahīk said, concerning His statement *In a Book kept guarded*, "It is a Book in the heavens."

INTERPRETATION OF *Which none touches save the purified*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *None touches* this guarded Book, save those whom God has purified from sins.

The interpreters disagreed over whom is intended by His statement *save the purified* (*muṭahharūn*):

OPINION: Some of them said: They are the angels.

An account of those who said that:

1 Following the Dār Hajar edition, which restores a lacuna that extends into the following report and is present in the earlier printed editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 22:363 (note 3).

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "When God wishes to send down a book, the scribal angels (*safara*)[1] write out a copy, *which none touches save the purified*, meaning the angels."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Rabīʿ b. Abī Rāshid—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *Which none touches save the purified*, "The angels who are in the heavens."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Rabīʿ b. Abī Rāshid—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *Which none touches save the purified*, "The angels".[2]

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Rabīʿ b. Abī Rāshid—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *Which none touches save the purified*, "The angels".

Q. 56:79

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—ʿUbayd Allāh, meaning al-ʿAtakī—Jābir b. Zayd and Abū Nahīk said, concerning His statement *Which none touches save the purified*, "The angels".

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—his father—ʿIkrima said, concerning *Which none touches save the purified*, "The angels".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Which none touches save the purified*, "The angels".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—ʿĀṣim—Abūʾl-ʿĀliya said, concerning *Which none touches save the purified*, "The angels".

OPINION: Others said: Rather, they are the carriers of the Torah and Gospel.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—his father—ʿIkrima said, concerning *Which none touches save the purified*, "The carriers of the Torah and the Gospel."

OPINION: Others said, concerning that: They are beings who have been purified from sins, like the angels and Messengers.

1 See Q.80:11–16, at verse 15, where the *safara* angels are mentioned (not included in this translation).

2 This report is absent from the ancient manuscript used by the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:364 (note 5).

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Marwān—ʿĀṣim al-Aḥwal—Abūʾl-Āliya al-Riyāḥī said, concerning His statement *Which none touches save the purified*, "It does not refer to you—you are sinners."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Which none touches save the purified*, "[Meaning] the angels, Prophets and Messengers who bring down [the Book] from God in a state of being purified. The Prophets are purified; Gabriel comes down with [the Book] in a state of having been purified; and the messenger [angels] who bring it are purified. That is the meaning of His statement *Which none touches save the purified*. The angels, Prophets, angel messengers and human Messengers all bring down [the Book] while in a state of having been purified." Then he recited God's statement *Set down by scribes noble and righteous* (Q.80:15–16) and said, "By the hands of the angels who keep an accurate account of each person's deeds."

Q. 56:79

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is: *None touches it* in God's presence *save the purified*.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Which none touches save the purified*, "These [folks] are in God's presence. In your world, the polluted polytheists and filthy hypocrites touch [the Book]."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Which none touches save the purified*, "*None touches it* in the presence of God *save the purified*. As for in the temporal world, polluted Magians and filthy hypocrites touch it." He added, "The [irregular] reading of Ibn Masʿūd is *mā yamassuhu illāʾl-muṭahharūn*."[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct interpretation regarding that, in our estimation, is that God (Majestic is His praise) informed us that *none touches* the guarded Book *save the purified*. By His statement, He left unspecified *the purified*. He does not specify one purified group to the exclusion of others, so therefore the angels are among the purified, and the Messengers and Prophets are among the purified. Anyone who has been purified from sins is among those who have been intended by His statement *save the purified*.

1 The only difference is that Ibn Masʿūd substituted *mā* for *lā*, both of which can serve as the first element in the exception construction in Arabic ("none").

INTERPRETATION OF *A revelation from the Lord of the Worlds*

He says: "This Qur'ān is *a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds*. He sent it down from the *Book kept guarded*," as we have been informed by:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—ʿUbayd Allāh al-ʿAtakī—Jābir b. Zayd and Abū Nahīk said, concerning His statement *A revelation from the Lord of the Worlds*, "The Qur'ān came down from that Book."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:81] *Is it this Statement that you scorn,* [56:82] *And for your livelihood you offer your denial?* [56:83] *Why, then, when (the soul) comes up to the throat,* [56:84] *And you are at that moment looking—* [56:85] *And We are nearer to him than you are, but you see not*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, do you speak gently to the deniers about the Qur'ān, despite all that I have informed and recounted to you about its [exalted] status? Do you conspire with them in their denial of it and their disbelief? Q. 56:80–1

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of this verse:

OPINION: Some of them said something similar to what we have just said concerning that.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *Is it this Statement that you are mudhinūn*, "Do you wish to conspire with them concerning [the Qur'ān] and incline towards them?"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Are you deniers (*mukadhdhibūn*) of this statement?

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Is it this Statement that you are mudhinūn*, "Deniers, not sincere believers".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *you are mudhinūn*, "Deniers".

INTERPRETATION OF *And for your livelihood (rizq) you offer your denial?*

He says: "*And [do you] offer* denial in the place of gratitude for God's sustenance for you?" This is like the statement of one person to another, *jaʿalta ʿalayya ʿalayka isāʾatan minka ilayya*, meaning: "You offer [in the place of] gratitude for my goodness, or the reward for my goodness to you, your wickedness towards me."

It has been alleged that al-Haytham b. ʿAdī[1] said that in the pure dialect of Azd, the expression *mā razaqa fulān* means "So-and-so did not show gratitude."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that, although there are some disagreements between them. An account of those who said that:

OPINION: Ibn Bashshār—Yaḥyā [b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Thaʿlabī—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī—ʿAlī (ṣ) said, concerning *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "Your gratitude". Q. 56:82

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Mūsā—Isrāʾīl—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Thaʿlabī—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī—ʿAlī elevated this [to the Prophet (ṣ)], who said, concerning *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "Your gratitude. You say, 'It rained upon us because of this or that rain-foreboding star (*naw'*)[2] [instead of thanking God for the rain].'"[3]

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Yaḥyā b. Abī Bukayr—Isrāʾīl—Abd al-Aʿlā [al-Thaʿlabī]—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [al-Sulamī]—ʿAlī—the Prophet (ṣ) said, concerning *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "*And for your* gratitude [*you offer*] *your denial*. [The Arabs] say, 'It rained upon us because of this or that rain-foreboding star.'"

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "It does not rain upon a people without some of them waking up ungrateful [to God]. They say, 'It rained upon us because of this or that rain-foreboding star.'" Ibn ʿAbbās then recited, *And for your rizq you offer your denial*.

1 Haytham b. ʿAdī al-Ṭāʾī (d. 206, 207 or 209/821, 822 or 824) was a prominent historian at the ʿAbbāsid court who was universally considered unreliable in the transmission of *ḥadīth*. Ṭabarī is reported to have drawn from his historical works in his *History*; see Charles Pellat, "al-Haytham b. ʿAdī al-Ṭāʾī", *EI²*; and Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 10:103–4.

2 For an extensive discussion of the meaning of *naw'*, see Lane, "*n-w-*". See also Charles Pellat's article, "*anwāʾ*", in the *EI²*.

3 According to Suyūṭī, ʿAlī's *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī, the *Musnads* of Ibn Ḥanbal and Aḥmad b. Manīʿ, and the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:234. He reports that Tirmidhī graded this *ḥadīth* as "fair".

Abū Kurayb—Ibn ʿAṭiyya—Muʿādh b. Sulaymān—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās was reciting *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, then said, "It never rains at night upon a people without some of the people waking up as polytheists. They say, 'It rained upon us because of this or that rain-foreboding star.'" [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, "*And for your* gratitude *you offer your denial*."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "You put denial in place of your gratitude for the rain and mercy that I (God) sent down upon you. You say, 'It rained upon us because of this or that rain-foreboding star.'" [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, "This is ingratitude (*kufr*) for the bounty that God bestowed upon them."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—Ismāʿīl b. Umayya said: I think he or someone else said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) heard a man say when it had rained, "It rained upon us because of some of the rains (*athānīn*) [sent by the constellation] Leo." [The Messenger] said, "You have lied! Rather, this is the *rizq* of God."[1]

Q. 56:82

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—Muḥammad b. Isḥāq—Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥārith al-Taymī—Abū Salama—Abū Hurayra: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Whenever God bestows bounties upon a people in the morning or evening, some of them become ungrateful. They say, 'It rained upon us because of a rain-foreboding star called such-and-such.'"[2] Muḥammd [b. Ibrāhīm] said, "I mentioned this *ḥadīth* to Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab, who said, 'We heard it from Abū Hurayra. Someone who saw ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r) while he was supplicating God for rain informed me that he turned to ʿAbbās and said, "O ʿAbbās, paternal uncle of the Messenger of God (ṣ), how many days remain [prior to the setting] of the Pleiades?" He replied, "The experts in this knowledge claim that it appears in the horizon after its setting on seven [nights]." He said, "The seventh [night] did not pass until it rained upon us."'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—ʿAlī said, concerning *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "He used to recite it as *And for your* gratitude (*shukrakum*) *you offer your denial*."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And for your rizq you offer your*

1 Given that Ismāʿīl b. Umayya died in 144/761–2 or 139/756–7, it is unsurprising that Suyūṭī does not mention this *ḥadīth* with its highly defective *isnād* in *al-Durr al-manthūr*.
2 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is unique to Ṭabarī's commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:236.

denial,[1] "You offer the rain-foreboding star in the place of the *rizq* of God. They credited stars, meaning rain-boding stars, with their own bounties. When rain came down upon them, they would say, 'It has rained upon us because of this or that rain-foreboding star.' When [rain] was withheld from them, they would deny it, and that is their denial."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—ʿAṭāʾ al-Khurāsānī said, concerning *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "Some people would say, whenever it rained upon them, 'It rained upon us because of the rain-foreboding star X; it rained upon us because of star Y.'"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "They say regarding the rain-foreboding stars, 'It rained upon us because of the rain-foreboding star X; it rained upon us because of foreboding star Y.'" He says: Say "[The rain] is from God, and it is His *rizq*."

Q. 56:82

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "God made your rain (*rizq*) in the sky, and you credit it to the foreboding stars."

Abū Ṣāliḥ [Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl] al-Ḍirārī[2]—Abū Jābir Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Azdī—Jaʿfar b. al-Zubayr—al-Qāsim—Abū Umāma—the Prophet (ṣ) said, "It does not rain upon a people at night without some of them waking up ungrateful [to God] for it." Then he said *And for your rizq you offer your denial*. One of them will say, "It rained upon us because of this or that star."[3]

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *And for your* share or fortune (*ḥaẓẓ*) from Him *you offer* your denial.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And for your rizq you offer your denial*,

1 The *isnād* of this report up to here is missing from earlier editions and later manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:371.
2 Following Ibn Ḥajar with "al-Ḍirārī" instead of "al-Ṣarārī" in the Ḥalabī edition; *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 5:485. I am grateful for Dr Yousef Meri's assistance in identifying this transmitter's name. The editors of the Dār Hajar edition chose "al-Ṣirārī", although they mention that "al-Ḍirārī" occurs in two of the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:372.
3 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is unique to Ṭabarī's commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:234.

"Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] would say, 'Woe to those people who take for themselves! Their only share from the Book of God is their denial of it (or Him).'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *And for your rizq you offer your denial*, "The servant whose only share from the Book of God is denial has lost out."

INTERPRETATION OF *Why, then, when (the soul) comes up to the throat, and you are at that moment looking*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity! Nay (*fa-halā*), *when* the souls *come up to* your throats as they are about to leave your bodies, *and you are at that moment looking*. He says: Whoever among your family is in their presence at this time will be looking at them.[1]

Q. 56:83-5

The second person pronoun (*antum*) is made plural here, with the meaning: "Whoever is present with the deceased, from his family or other people." It is well known in the Arabic language that one can address a group with a verb, as if they were his family and his companions, with the implied meaning of "some of them", whether they are absent or present. For example, one says "You [plural] killed someone", even though only a single person killed him, who may be absent or present [at the time the statement is made].

We have already clarified the meaning of equivalent passages to this one in many places in our book.[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *And We are nearer to him than you are, but you see not*

He says: Our messenger angels, who seize his life spirit (*rūḥ*), *are nearer to him than you are, but you see not*. He says: *But you see not* them.[3]

One of the Basran experts in Arabic[4] said: The verses, *Why, then, when (the soul) comes up to the throat, and you are at that moment looking*, are said as if [God] heard them say, and God knows best, "We have the power not to die and can prevent it." Then He said, *Why, then, when (the soul) comes up*

1 This explanation, along with the content of the following paragraph, can be found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:130.

2 See Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.2:107 (not included in this translation).

3 This sentence is absent from earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:373.

4 This paragraph refers to and, in places, is identical to the opinion of al-Akhfash found in his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* (2:703).

to the throat and then *Why, then, if you are not madīnīn* (Q.56:86), meaning "not requited", do you not *force back* these souls? You see how they leave [the body, so put them back] *if you are truthful* [in claiming] that you can prevent death.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:86] *Why, then, if you are not indebted (to Us),* [56:87] *Do you not force it back, if you are truthful?* [56:88] *Thus, if he is of those brought nigh,* [56:89] *Then (for him), ease and plenty, and a Garden of delight.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, why not, *if you are not indebted (madīnīn)*?

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of His statement *not madīnīn*.

Q. 56:86

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: Not held accountable (*ghayr muḥāsabīn*).

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Why, then, if you are not madīnīn*, "Not held accountable".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *not madīnīn*, "[Not] held accountable".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Why, then, if you are not madīnīn*, "In other words, [not] held accountable."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement *Why, then, if you are not madīnīn*, "They were denying that they would be held accountable (*yudānū*) after death. He said: [God] is *Master of the Day of Reckoning* (Q.1:4), the day when all people will held accountable for their deeds. The word *yudānū* means 'they are held accountable.'"

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Why, then, if you are not madīnīn*, "It means not held accountable."

Ibn Bashshār—Sulaymān—Abū Hilāl—Qatāda said, concerning *Why, then, if you are not madīnīn*, "Not resurrected, not held accountable."

OPINION: Others said: Its meaning is: Not resurrected.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Hawdha—ʿAwf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *Why, then, if you are not madīnīn*, "Not resurrected on Resurrection Day, [so] *force it back, if you are truthful*."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, its meaning is: Not requited for your deeds.[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is to say: Not held accountable or requited for their deeds, because this word derives from the verb *tadīnu/tudānu*, and [is found in the nominal form in] God's statement *Master of the Day of Reckoning* (Q.1:4).[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *Do you not force it back, if you are truthful?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Return these souls, after they have reached their throats, to their [proper] abode in their bodies, *if you are truthful*—if you can prevent death, Reckoning and Requital.

Q. 56:87–8

The apodosis (*jawāb*) of *law* ("when, if") for both verses *Why, then,* when (*the soul*) *comes up to the throat* and *Why, then,* if *you are not indebted* is a single apodosis, and it is His statement *force it back*. This is similar to His statement *but if verily there comes to you from Me a guidance, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve* (Q.2:38), in which there is a single apodosis for both *but if verily there comes to you from Me a guidance* and *then whoso follows My guidance*.[3]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that about *force it back*. An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Do you not force it back*, "This soul, *if you are truthful?*"

INTERPRETATION OF *Thus, if he is of those brought nigh, then (for him), ease and plenty*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Thus if* the deceased *is of those brought nigh*, whom God brings close to His precinct in His gardens, *then ease and plenty*. He says: *Then* for him is *ease and plenty*.

1 This is the preferred opinion of Abū ʿUbayda (*Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:252) and, as we have just seen, al-Akhfash. Al-Farrā' also mentions that he heard it and considers it an alternative to glossing *madīnīn* as "owned (*mamlūkīn*)"; *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:131.

2 For Ṭabarī's commentary on this verse in Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (1), see volume 1.

3 This explanation is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:130.

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of this verse. Most of the reciters of the garrison cities read *fa-rawḥ*, with a *fatḥa* on the *rā'*, meaning "then for him is a coolness and *rayḥān*." He says: "Vast provision", in the opinion of some of them. According to others, [it means]: For him is ease (*rāḥa*) and *rayḥān*. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī read *fa-rūḥ*, with a *ḍamma* on the *rā'*, meaning "his spirit will come out with a sweet aroma."[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The reading regarding that which is most likely correct is *rawḥ* with a *fatḥa*, on the basis of the consensus of the reciters upon it, with the meaning: "There is mercy and forgiveness for him, as well as pure, delightful provision."

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *fa-rawḥun wa-rayḥānun*.

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: "ease and a resting place".

Q. 56:89

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *fa-rawḥun wa-rayḥānun*, "Ease and a resting place".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Thus, if he is of those brought nigh, then (for him), ease and rayḥān*, "*Rayḥān* means seeking rest from the temporal world, *and a Garden of delight*. He says: Forgiveness and mercy."

OPINION: Others said: *Rawḥ* means "ease" and *rayḥān* means "provision (*rizq*)".

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *rawḥ*, "Ease". Concerning His statement *and rayḥān*, he said, "Provision".

OPINION: Others said: *Rawḥ* is "joy" and *rayḥān* is "provision".

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Idrīs—his father—Abū Isḥāq—Saʿīd b. Jubayr

1 Ibn ʿAṭiyya also ascribes this reading to Ibn ʿAbbās and an unidentified "large group" of reciters; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:254.

said, concerning His statement *fa-rawḥun wa-rayḥānun*, "*Rawḥ* is 'joy' and *rayḥān* is 'provision'."

OPINION: As for those who recited *rūḥ*, with a *ḍamma*, they said: The *rūḥ* is "the human spirit", and *rayḥān* has its ordinary meaning (of aromatic plants).[1] They said: The meaning of that is that the spirits of *those brought nigh* leave their bodies at the time of death, with a sweet aroma that can be smelled.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—al-Muʿtamir [b. Sulaymān al-Taymī]—his father—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *fa-rūḥun wa-rayḥānun*, "His spirit leaves his body with a sweet aroma."[2]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ—Abū'l-ʿĀliya said, concerning *Thus if he is of those brought nigh*, "Not one of *those brought nigh*—in other words, *the Foremost* (*sābiqūn*)—separates from the temporal world until they are brought a bough of an aromatic plant in the Garden, which they smell just prior to their [soul] being seized."

Q. 56:89

OPINION: Others among them, who read *rawḥ* [instead of *rūḥ*], said: *Rawḥ* is "mercy" and *rayḥān* carries its ordinary meaning [of aromatic plants].

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *fa-rawḥun wa-rayḥānun*, "*Rawḥ* is 'mercy' and the *rayḥān* (aromatic plants) are put upon them at the time of death."

OPINION: Others said: *Rawḥ* is "mercy" and *rayḥān* is "the resting place".

An account of those who said that:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *fa-rawḥun wa-rayḥānun*, "The *rawḥ* is 'forgiveness and mercy', while the *rayḥān* is 'the resting place'."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—his father—Mundhir al-Thawrī—Rabīʿ b. Khuthaym said, "*Thus if he is of those brought nigh*, at the time of death, *then rawḥun and rayḥānun* is brought to him from the Garden."[3]

Ibn Bashshār—Abu ʿĀmir—Qurra—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Thus, if he is of those brought nigh, fa-rawḥun wa-rayḥānun and a Garden of delight*, "This is all in the Hereafter." Some people said to him,

1 For more on the meaning of *rayḥān*, see Ṭabarī's commentary above on Q.55:12.
2 Following the more complete version of this report in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:378.
3 This report appears to support the fifth OPINION.

"By God! Rather, they will see all this at the time of death."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—Ḥammād—Qurra—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī].

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: What is meant by *rawḥ* is "joy, mercy and forgiveness", because it derives from the expression "I found a *rawḥ*", which one says when one comes across a refreshing breeze that grants respite from intense heat. As for *rayḥān*, in my estimation, it is the aromatic plants that are put upon a person at the time of death, like what was said by Abū'l-ʿĀliya and al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] and those who said something similar to them, because this is the predominant and most apparent of its meanings.

INTERPRETATION OF *and a Garden of delight*

He says: In addition to these two things, there is a Garden *of delight* for them in which they will have an enjoyable life. Q. 56:90

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, "*A Garden of delight* is presented to [*those brought nigh*]."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:90] *And if he is of the Companions of the Right*, [56:91] *It is guaranteed for you—(truly) you are among the Companions of the Right.*[1] [56:92] *But if he is of the rejecters, the erring*, [56:93] *Then the welcome will be boiling water* [56:94] *And roasting in Hellfire.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And if* the deceased *is of the Companions of the Right*, who are taken to the Garden on the right side, *it is guaranteed for you—(truly) you are among the Companions of the Right* (*fa-salāmun laka min aṣḥābi'l-yamīn*).

There is disagreement over the meaning of *fa-salāmun laka min aṣḥābi'l-yamīn*.

Some of the interpreters said, concerning this, what was narrated to us from:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And if he is of the Companions of*

1 Most translators interpret this verse differently. Pickthall has "Then (the greeting), 'Peace be unto you' from those on the right hand," while Arberry has "'Peace be upon thee, Companion of the Right.'" Compare this passage with Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.36:58 in volume 1.

the Right, fa-salāmun laka min aṣḥābi'l-yamīn, "Security (*salām*) from God's punishment,[1] and God's angels greet the person [on the right hand]."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And if he is of the Companions of the Right, fa-salāmun laka min aṣḥābi'l-yamīn*, "He is secure from what he dislikes."

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over the meaning of that:

[1] One of the Basran grammarians[2] said: *And if he is of the Companions of the Right, fa-salāmun laka from the Companions of the Right* means, "'Peace' will be said to you."[3]

[2] One of the Kufan grammarians[4] said, "*Fa-salāmun from the Companions of the Right* means, 'It is guaranteed for you (*musallam laka*) that you are among the Companions of the Right.'" He added, "that you are (*annaka*)" to this sentence in his interpretation. A similar expression is if one says, "You are truthful [that you are] travelling with little,"[5] in response to a person's statement, "I am travelling with little." The expression, "that you are (*annaka*)", is implied in the statement, "You are travelling with little, and are truthful that it is little." Therefore, the meaning of *fa-salāmun* is: It is guaranteed that you are among the Companions of the Right.[6] It can also be like an invitation to him, similar to the expression "May God bestow upon you men!"[7] If you put *salām* in the nominative case, then it is an invitation; and God knows best if this is correct.

Q. 56:91

[3] Other Kufan grammarians said: *Thus, if he is of those brought nigh* combines two apodoses (*jawābayn*) in order to show that *ammā* (*Thus*) is the protasis (*jazā'*) [of this conditional sentence].

He said: As for *fa-salāmun laka min aṣḥābi'l-yamīn*, its meaning is: "It is guaranteed for you that you are among the Companions of the Right."[8] He said: The original statement (*aṣl al-kalima*) is: "This is guaranteed for you." Then the particle *an* is dropped and *min* is put in its place. So it is said, "It is guaranteed for you (*musallamun laka*)—you are among the

1 Following the superior reading in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:380.
2 This is al-Akhfash's opinion; see his *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 2:703.
3 Reading *fa-yuqālu lahu: salām laka* in al-Akhfash's *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* (2:703) instead of the printed *fa-yuqālu: s-l-m laka* in the Halabī edition (27:213). Interestingly, the Dār Hajar editors read this as *silm* instead of following the ancient manuscript reading of *salām*; 22:380.
4 The content of this passage is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:131.
5 Arabic: *anta musaddaqun musāfirun ʿan qalīl*.
6 Arabic: *fa-sullima laka anta min aṣḥāb al-yamīn*.
7 Arabic: *fa-saqyan laka min al-rijāl*; literally, "[May God] rain men upon you!"
8 This sentence is missing from earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; Dār Hajar, 22:381.

Companions of the Right," and that is the way it is for him. In other words, there are two statements in this verse: [a] "It is indisputable for you"; and [b] "Someone will say, 'You are among the Companions of the Right.'"

[4] It has been said that [*fa-salāmun laka*] means "greeted", just as you say, "Greetings to you from the people (*fa-salāmun laka min al-qawm*)" or "A drink for you, from the people (*saqyan laka min al-qawm*)" and that both cases are simple statements.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is to say: Its meaning is: *It is guaranteed for you*—truly you *are among the Companions of the Right*.[1] Then the word *anna* [*ka*] is dropped and indicated by the word *min*, with the meaning: You are secure from God's punishment and anything that you dislike, because you are among the Companions of the Right.

Q. 56:92–5

INTERPRETATION OF *But if he is of the rejecters, the erring, then the welcome will be boiling water*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *But if* the deceased *is of the rejecters* of the signs of God, and the deviators from His path, *then* for him *the welcome will be boiling water*. This is water that increases in heat until it reaches the utmost degree of boiling, and it is his [only] drink.

INTERPRETATION OF *And roasting in Hellfire*

He says: And a burning fire, by which he is consumed.

Taṣliya is the nominal form *tafʿila* from the expression "God puts him (*ṣallāhu*) near the fire." He puts him near it, and that is if He burns him with it.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[56:95] *Lo! this is certain truth.* [56:96] *Therefore, praise the Name of your Lord, the Tremendous.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *Lo! this*, which we have informed you concerning *those drawn nigh, the Companions of the Right*, and *the rejecters, the erring*, and their situations, *is certain truth*. He says: It is the truth from the certain report (*al-khabar al-yaqīn*), in which there is no doubt.

1 Arabic: *fa-salāmun laka annaka min aṣḥāb al-yamin*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Lo! this is certain truth*, "The certain report".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *But if he is of the rejecters, the erring, then the welcome will be boiling water, and roasting in Hellfire. Lo! this is certain truth* to the end of the *sūra*, "Truly God (Exalted is He) does not abandon a single one of his creatures until He presents him with the certain truth (*yaqīn*) from this Qurʾān. As for the believer, he is certain of its truth in the temporal world, which benefits him on Resurrection Day. As for the disbeliever, he is certain of its truth on Resurrection Day, when it is too late to benefit him."

Q. 56:95

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over why *ḥaqq* is annexed to *al-yaqīn* in an *idāfa* construction in this verse [given that the understood meaning is *al-ḥaqq al-yaqīn*].[1]

OPINION: One of the Basran grammarians[2] said: The word *ḥaqq* is annexed to *al-yaqīn* in the same way as the expression *dhālika dīnu'l-qayyima* (Q.98:5), which is understood to mean: "That is the way of the upright religion (*dhālika dīnu'l-millati'l-qayyima*)." Therefore, this verse means: "That is the truth of the certain matter (*dhālika ḥaqqu'l-amri'l-yaqīn*)." This is not similar to the expression *hādhā rajul al-saw'* ("This is the bad man"; literally, "the man of badness"), because one cannot say *hādhā'l-rajul al-saw'* because the "badness" is not identical to "the man", whereas "the certain (*al-yaqīn*)" and "the truth (*al-ḥaqq*)" refer to the same thing [in this verse].

OPINION: One of the Kufans[3] said: "Certain" is an adjective (*naʿt*) of "truth". It is as if God had said *al-ḥaqq al-yaqīn* or *al-dīn al-qayyim* ("the upright way"). This structure occurs frequently in the Qurʾān, such as

1 The problem Ṭabarī is addressing is that *yaqīn* (certain) is generally understood to describe *ḥaqq* (truth), and thus both words should be definite, rather than annexed in a way that would read, most literally, "this is the truth of certainty". One of the notorious differences between the alleged Basran and Kufan schools of Arabic grammar is that the Kufans allow the second term of the *idāfa* construct to act as an adjective of the first term, whereas the Basrans do not allow this; this diference is clearly reflected in this passage.

2 This is the opinion of al-Akhfash in his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* (2:703).

3 This is the opinion of al-Farrāʾ; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:55–6.

la-dār al-ākhira and *wa'l-dār al-ākhira* ("the abode of the Hereafter").[1] When an *idāfa* construction is used, it is imagined that [the second term] is distinct from the first term.[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *Therefore, praise the Name of your Lord, the Tremendous*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Therefore, praise your Lord, the Tremendous*, by invoking Him with His most beautiful Names.

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Wāqiʿa

Q. 56:96

1 For *dār al-ākhira* as an *idāfa* construction, see Q.12:109 and 16:30; for *al-dār al-ākhira*, in which *ākhira* is an adjective of *dār*, see Q.2:94, 6:32, 7:169, 28:77, 28:83 and 29:64.

2 In his commentary on Q.12:109, al-Farrāʾ mentions this verse and says, "*the truth* is *the certain* (*al-ḥaqq huwa'l-yaqīn*)." He affirms that it is permissible grammatically for an object to be conjoined with itself as long as the two expressions for this object differ; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:55–6.

IRON
SŪRAT AL-ḤADĪD
(Q. 57:1–29)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:1] All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God; He is the Mighty, the Wise. [57:2] His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; He gives life and brings death; and He is powerful over all things.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) means, by His statement, *All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God*, that everything other than He in His creation glorifies Him and magnifies Him, affirming His Lordship and submitting to Him in obedience, just as He (Majestic is His praise) said, *The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein glorify Him, and there is not a thing but glorifies His praise; but you understand not their glorification* (Q.17:44).

INTERPRETATION OF *He is the Mighty, the Wise*

He says: However, He (Majestic is His majesty) *is the Mighty* in His vengeance against anyone in the heavens and earth who disobeys Him and goes against His command, and *the Wise* in His management of their affairs, and His granting them the ability to dispose freely of what He wills and likes [for them].

INTERPRETATION OF *His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: To Him belongs the power (*sulṭān*) over the heavens and earth, and all that is in them. Nothing that is in them can stymie Him. He executes the command and applies the ruling (*ḥukm*) to them all.

INTERPRETATION OF *He gives life and brings death*

He says: He *gives life* to whichever creatures He wills, by bringing them

into existence however He wills. This is due to His act of creating a living creature from a lifeless drop by means of breathing the spirit (*rūḥ*) into it after turning over [the spirit] multiple times in [the living creature]. Something similar to this is also done for other things. He *brings death* to whichever living things He wills after they have reached their allotted time; and then He effaces them.

INTERPRETATION OF *and He is powerful over everything*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: He possesses power over all things and nothing that He wishes to do is impossible or difficult—whether it is giving life to the dead, elevating some folk and debasing others, or any other things.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS: Q. 57:3

[57:3] He is the First and the Last, and the Overpowering[1] and the Interior; He is Knower of all things. [57:4] He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then He mounted the Throne. He knows all that enters the earth and all that emerges from it and all that comes down from the sky and all that ascends therein; and He is with you wherever you may be. And God is Seer of what you do.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *He is the First* prior to everything, without a limit (*hadd*) *and the Last*. He says: *And the Last*, after everything, without an end. It is only said this way because He existed when there was nothing other than He, and He will exist after everything has been annihilated, as He (Majestic is His praise) has said, *Everything will perish save His Face* (Q.28:88). He says: *And He is the Overpowering* (*al-Ẓāhir*) over everything other than Him and is the Lofty, above (*fawq*) everything. Absolutely nothing is higher than Him. He says: *And He is the Interior* of all things, as nothing is nearer to anything than He, as He said, *and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein* (Q.50:16).

A report on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ), which the interpreters accept, says something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that and the report which has been narrated to that effect:

[1] This name of God, *al-Ẓāhir*, is usually translated as "the Manifest" or "the Outward". I am following Tabari's explanation of its meaning (see below). For a detailed study of this Divine Name, see Lucas, "Is the Qur'ān Wise?" 541–566.

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *He is the First and the Last, and the Overpowering and the Interior*,

> It has been mentioned to us that once, when the Prophet of God (ṣ) was sitting with his Companions, a cloud spread out over them and he said, "Do you know what that is [above you]?" They replied, "God and His Messenger know best." He replied, ["These are clouds, they water the earth. God drives them to a people who do not thank Him for them and do not call out to Him." Then he said, "Do you know what is above these clouds?" They replied, "God and His Messenger know best."][1] He said, "It is the first heaven (*raqīʿ*), an overflowing wave, *a protective ceiling* (Q.21:32)." Then he said, "Do you know how much distance is between you and this [heaven]?" They replied, "God and His Messenger know best." He said, "The distance covered over a 500-year journey." Then he said, "Do you know what is above [this heaven]?" They replied as they did previously and [the Prophet] said, "There is another heaven above it and the space between them is the distance covered over a 500-year journey." Then he said, "Do you know what is above that?" and they replied like they did previously, and [the Prophet] said, "The Throne is above it and the distance between it and the seventh heaven is equivalent to the distance between two heavens."[2] Then he said, "Do you know what is underneath you?" They replied, "God and His Messenger know best." [The Prophet] said, "There is another [layer] of earth, and between it and [the surface of the earth] is the distance covered over a 500-mile journey." [The Prophet continued speaking] until he had enumerated seven [layers] of earth, between every two of which was the distance covered over a 500-mile journey. Then he said, "By the One in Whose Hand rests the soul of Muḥammad! Were any one of you to descend by means of a rope and bucket to the lowest [layer] of earth, you would land upon God." Then he recited, *He is the First and the Last, and the Overpowering and the Interior; He is Knower of all things.*[1]

Q. 57:3

1 This lacuna in the manuscripts was filled by the editors of the Dār Hajar edition (22:386) and the Halabī edition (27:216) of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

2 It appears that the narrators of this report suppressed the Prophet's discussion of the third through seventh heavens in the interest of brevity, since only two heavens are mentioned prior to the Throne.

INTERPRETATION OF *He is Knower of all things*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He possesses knowledge of all things—nothing is concealed from Him. Not an atom's weight of anything in the earth or heavens will be kept away from Him; everything smaller or larger than this will be [recorded] in a clear register.

INTERPRETATION OF *He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It is He Who makes the seven heavens and earths, and manages them and all that is in them. Then He mounts His Throne, rising above it, elevated.[2]

Q. 57:3-4

INTERPRETATION OF *He knows all that enters the earth and all that emerges from it*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, informing [us] of His nature (*ṣifatihī*) and that nothing from His creation is concealed from Him: *He knows all that enters the earth* among His creatures.

By His statement *yaliju*, He means "to enter". *And all that emerges from it* from among them *and all that comes down from the sky* to the earth, absolutely everything, *and all that ascends therein*. [He knows] everything that ascends from the earth up to [the heavens].

INTERPRETATION OF *and He is with you wherever you may be*

He says: O humanity, *and He* is a witness of you, *wherever you may be*, for He knows you and your deeds, your transient and fixed abodes, [all] while He is on His Throne, above His seven heavens. *And God is Seer of what you do*. He says: *And God* possesses vision of the deeds which you all do—the

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found on the authority Abū Hurayra in Tirmidhī's *Sunan*; the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; and books by Bayhaqī and Abū'l-Shaykh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:246. Note that Ṭabarī's narration of this *ḥadīth* is *mursal*, which may be why Suyūṭī does not mention it.

2 Ṭabarī explains the meaning of how the verb *istawā* applies to God in his commentary on Q 2:29 (not included in this translation); see *Commentary*, 200–1.

good and bad, acts of obedience and disobedience—and He counts [them all] in order to compensate the righteous person for his goodness, and the wicked one for his wickedness on a day *when every soul will be repaid what it has earned, while they are not wronged* (Q.45:22).[1]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:5] *His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and to God (all) things are brought back.* [57:6] *He causes the night to penetrate the day, and He causes the day to penetrate the night, and He is Knower of all that is in the chests.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: To God belongs the power over the heavens and earth. He executes His command in all of them and with all of their inhabitants, *and to God (all) things are brought back.* God (Majestic is His praise) says: *And to God* is the outcome and final destination of all
Q. 57:5-6 His creatures—He will adjudicate between them by means of His ruling.

INTERPRETATION OF *He causes the night to penetrate the day*

By His statement, *He causes the night to penetrate the day*, God means: He puts the remaining hours of the night into the daytime, thus making it an addition to its [normal night-time] hours. *And He causes the day to penetrate the night*. He says: And He puts the remaining hours of the daytime into the night, thus making it an addition to its [normal daytime] hours.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that.

ṬABARĪ SAID: We have already mentioned the reports in support of this interpretation earlier in our book,[2] although we will mention right here a few which we did not mention previously, God willing:

Hannād b. al-Sarī—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *He causes the night to penetrate the day and He causes the day to penetrate the night*, "The shortening of this is in the lengthening of that, and the lengthening of this is in the shortening of that."

Ibn Bashshār—Muʾammal—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, concerning His statement *He causes the night to penetrate the day and He causes the day to penetrate the night*, "The entry

1 Ṭabarī deviates slightly from the Arabic of this Qurʾānic verse, saying *yawm tujzā kullu nafs* instead of *wa-li-tujzā kullu nafs*.

2 Ṭabarī addresses this topic in his commentary on Q.3:27 (not included in this translation).

of the night into the day, and the entry of the day into the night."

Abū'l-Sā'ib—Abū Muʿāwiya—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, concerning His statement *He causes the night to penetrate the day and He causes the day to penetrate the night*, "The shortening of the winter days into its long nights, and the shortening of summer nights into its long days."

INTERPRETATION OF *and He is Knower of all that is in the chests*

He says: And He possesses knowledge of the inner thoughts contained in the chests of His servants, and what good or evil [deeds] their souls resolve or tell them to do. Nothing can conceal from Him this [information].

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:7] *Believe in God and His Messenger, and spend of that which He has made you trustees; and such of you as believe and spend, theirs will be a great reward.*

Q. 57:7

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *believe in God* by affirming His oneness, *and in His Messenger* Muḥammad (ṣ) by having faith in and following what he has brought you from God, *and spend of that which He has made you trustees*. God (Majestic is His praise) says: *And spend* in the path of God *of that* wealth God has conferred upon you and made you inherit from your predecessors. He has made you the deputies (*khulafāʾ*) of [their wealth].

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *mustakhlafīna fīhi*, "Those whose lives have been prolonged by [His] sustenance."

INTERPRETATION OF *and such of you as believe and spend, theirs will be a great reward*

He says: O humanity, those among you who *believe* in God and His Messenger *and spend* in the path of God of that wealth which God has conferred upon them, from their predecessors, and with which He has provisioned them—*theirs will be a great reward*. He says: They will have a tremendous reward.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:8] *What ails you that you believe not in God when the Messenger calls you to believe in your Lord, and He has already made a covenant with you, if you are believers?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, what is the matter with you, that you do not affirm the oneness of God, while His Messenger, Muḥammad (ṣ), calls upon you to affirm His oneness? Many proofs have come to you [attesting] the reality of this and removing your excuse [for denying it], yet doubt still lingers in your hearts. *He has already made a covenant with you.* It has been said: What is meant by that is: Your Lord has already made your covenant with you, [when you were] in the loins of Adam,[1] that God is your Lord—there is no god for you save Him.

An account of those who said that:

Q. 57:8

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *He has already made a covenant with you*, "In Adam's loins".

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of this verse. Most of the Hijazi and Iraqi reciters (except for Abū ʿAmr) read ***wa-qad akhadha mīthāqakum*** with a *fatḥa* on the *alif* of *akhadha* and with ***mīthāq*** in the accusative case, with the meaning of: "Your Lord has already made your covenant." Abū ʿAmr read *qad ukhidha mīthāqukum* with a *ḍamma* on the *alif* and *mīthāq* in the nominative case, in the passive voice.[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in my estimation, is that the two readings are very close in meaning and the reciter will be correct reading either one. In my personal opinion, the reading with *fatḥas* on the *alif* [of *akhadha*] and *mīthāq* in the accusative case is the superior reading, because so many reciters adopted it and very few reciters chose the other reading.

INTERPRETATION OF *if you are believers*

He says: *If you* wish to believe in God some day, right now is the most

1 Ṭabarī is referring here to the famous "Verse of the Covenant" (Q.7:172): *And (remember) when Your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, (saying), Am I not your Lord? They said, Yes, verily we testify. (That was) lest you should say on Resurrection Day, Lo! of this we were unaware.*

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya also ascribes the passive reading exclusively to Abū ʿAmr; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:258.

appropriate time for you to believe, on account of the proofs the Messenger has shared and shown you, and his invitation to you to [believe in God], whose authenticity has been affirmed by signs, indicators and the covenant which was made with you all.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:9] *He it is Who sends down clear revelations to His servant, that He may bring you forth from darkness into light; and lo! for you, God is Kind, Merciful.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It is God Who sends down *revelations* that are *bayyināt*—meaning "set forth in great detail (*mufaṣṣalāt*)"—to His servant Muḥammad (ṣ), *that He may bring you forth from darkness into light.* God (Majestic is His praise) says: *That He may bring you forth*, O humanity, from the darkness of disbelief to the light of faith, and from error to guidance.

Q. 57:9

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *from darkness into light*, "From error to guidance".

INTERPRETATION OF *and lo! for you, God is Kind, Merciful*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And lo! for you, God*, by His act of sending down to His servant the clear revelations, which He has sent down to him in order to guide you and show you the right way, *is* the possessor of kindness and mercy to you. He did that for you out of His kindness and mercy to you.[1]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:10] *And what ails you that you spend not in the way of God when to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth? Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal to the rest of you—such are greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. To each God has promised goodness. And God is Aware of what you do.*

1 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition; 22:391.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *and what ails you that you spend not in the way of God* [a portion] of that which God has provided for you? All of your wealth, which you do not spend during your lifetimes in the way of God, will return to God, because to Him belongs *the inheritance of the heavens and the earth*. God (Majestic is His praise) only urges [people] to do this for their own good, saying to them, "Spend your wealth in the way of God so that this can be a repository for your benefit with God before you all die. Do not [waste time] pondering this, letting [your] wealth become the inheritance of He to whom the heavens and earth belong."

INTERPRETATION OF *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal to the rest of you*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of that.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: O humanity, those who believed prior to the victory of Mecca[1] and emigrated are not equal to you. Q. 57:10

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal*, "He believed and spent. He says: He emigrated (*hājara*). Someone who emigrated is not like someone who did not emigrate."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Layth—Mujāhid said, concerning *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal*, "Who believed [before the victory]."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān said: Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, "He says: Something else."[2]

OPINION: Others said: By *the victory*, God intended the victory of Mecca and by "spending", He intended spending in support of warfare against the polytheists.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Those who spent and fought before the*

1 The victory of Mecca took place in Ramadan 8/January 630, approximately two years prior to the Prophet Muḥammad's death. For more on this event, see Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. VIII*, 160–87.

2 Arabic: *ʿan Sufyān qāla: yaqūlu ghayru dhālika*; Dār Hajar, 22:392.

victory are not equal to the rest of you—such are greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. To each God has promised goodness, "There were two types of fighting, one of which was superior to the other; and two types of spending, one of which was superior to the other. Spending and fighting prior to the victory—meaning the victory of Mecca—are superior to spending and fighting after it."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *before the victory*, "The victory of Mecca".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAyyāsh—Zayd b. Aslam said, concerning the verse *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal*, "The victory of Mecca".

OPINION: Others said: In this context, *the victory* means the Treaty of Hudaybiya.

An account of those who said that:

Ishāq b. Shāhīn—Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī] said, "The division between the two emigrations is the victory of Hudaybiya. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal*." Q. 57:10

Ḥumayd b. Masʿada—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī] said, concerning the verse *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal*, "The victory of Ḥudaybiya. The division between the two emigrations[1] is the victory of Ḥudaybiya."

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Wahhāb—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī] said, "The division between the two emigrations is the victory of Ḥudaybiya. [When] the verse *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal* through *And God is Aware of what you do* was sent down, they said, 'O Messenger of God, is this a victory?' He replied, 'Yes, a great one.'"

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī] said, "The division between the two emigrations is the victory of Ḥudaybiya." Then he recited the verse beginning with [*Those who spent and fought before the victory*] *are not equal*.

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Hishām b. Saʿd—Zayd b. Aslam—ʿAṭāʾ b. Yasār—Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) said to us in the year of Ḥudaybiya, 'It will soon happen that a people will look down upon your deeds [in comparison] to their deeds.'

1 Following the reading of *hijratayn* in the Dār Hajar edition (22:394) instead of *ʿumratayn* in the Halabī edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

We said, 'Who are they, O Messenger of God? Are they from Quraysh?' He replied, 'No, rather the people of the Yemen have the softest, most gentle hearts.'[1] We said, 'Are they better than us, O Messenger of God?' He replied, 'If any of them had a mountain of gold and spent it [in the path of God], he would not achieve the amount [of reward] of any of you, not even half of it. Truly: this is the division between us and the [rest of] mankind,' and he recited, *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal* through *And God is Aware of what you do*."[2]

Ibn al-Barqī—Ibn Abī Maryam—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Zayd b. Aslam—Abū Saʿīd al-Tammār[3] said,

> The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "It will soon happen that a people will look down upon your deeds [in comparison] to their deeds." We said, "Who are they, O Messenger of God? Are they from Quraysh?" He said, "No, they have the softest, most gentle hearts." Then he pointed his hand in the direction of Yemen, saying, "They are the people of Yemen—truly faith is Yemeni and wisdom comes from Yemen!" We said, "O Messenger of God, are they better than us?" He replied, "By the One in Whose hand rests my soul, were one of them to spend a mountain of gold [in the path of God], he would not achieve the amount [of reward] of any of you, not even half of it." Then [the Prophet] put his fingers together and extended his little finger, saying, "Truly this is the division between us and the [rest of] mankind," and he recited, *Those who spent and fought before the victory are not equal to the rest of you—such are greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. To each God has promised goodness.*

Q. 57:10

1 Yemeni tribes formed the bulk of the Muslim armies which conquered Persia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt in the decades after Muḥammad's death. This report (and the following one) suggests that some of these Yemeni soldiers belittled the accomplishments of the senior Muslim Companions, since the battles they waged netted so little territory relative to the vast conquests of the armies during the caliphates of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān.

2 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh, and Abū Nuʿaym's *Dalā'il al-nubuuwa*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:249.

3 Virtually nothing is known about Abū Saʿīd al-Tammār. Ibn Abī Ḥātim does not identify his proper name and merely states that he narrated from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī and that Zayd b. Aslam narrated from him; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa'l-taʿdīl*, 9:376. It appears that he is a Successor, which means that this narration is *mursal*. On the basis of a parallel report found in Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr*, the Dār Hajar editors inserted the Companion Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī into the *isnād* to make it *marfūʿ*, even though the latter Abū Saʿīd is missing from the manuscript of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 22:395 (note 1).

TABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: The meaning of that is: O humanity, *Those who spent* in the way of God *and fought* the polytheists *before the victory* of Hudaybiya *are not equal to the rest of you* who spent and fought after it, on the basis of the report we have mentioned on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ), which we narrated from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī. [God] refrained from mentioning the phrase "who spent and fought after it" because it is sufficiently indicated by the passage in which it is mentioned.

[He says:] *such are greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards.* God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: These [Muslims] who spent in the way of God and fought the polytheists prior to the victory of Ḥudaybiya *are greater in rank* in the Garden with God *than are those who spent* [in the way of God] *and fought* after that.

Q. 57:10

INTERPRETATION OF *To each God has promised goodness*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: God has promised [admission to] the Garden to each of these [groups]—those who spent [in the way of God] and fought prior to the victory, and those who spent and fought afterwards—on account of their spending in His path and fighting His enemies.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Those who spent and fought afterwards. To each God has promised goodness*, "[That is] the Garden."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *To each God has promised goodness*, "The Garden".

INTERPRETATION OF *And God is Aware of what you do*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And God is Aware of what you do*—spending in the way of God, fighting His enemies and other deeds that you do—and nothing you do can be concealed from Him. He will reward or punish you on the basis of all that on Resurrection Day.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:11] *Who is he that will lend to God a goodly loan, that He may multiply it for him and his may be a generous reward?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Who is* this [person] *that* will spend in the way of God in this world, while anticipating and desiring that which is with God [in the Hereafter]? This is the *goodly loan. That He may multiply it for him.*[1] He says: So *that* His Lord *may multiply for him* 700-fold this loan, which he has loaned Him by spending [his wealth] in His way.

One of the Basran grammarians[2] said, concerning His statement *Who is he that will lend to God a goodly loan*, "This is like the Arabs' expression 'I owe you a good loan and a bad loan,' when they do something good for him." He recited a verse of poetry by al-Shanfarā:

sanajzī Salāmāna'bna Mufrija qarḍahā
bimā qaddamat aydihimu fa-azallati

Q. 57:11

We will repay our debt to the Salāmān son of Mufrij
For all the wrongs that their hands had wrought in times gone by.[3]

INTERPRETATION OF *and his may be a generous reward*

He says: He will have a generous reward and recompense.

The word *reward* (*ajr*) means "the Garden".

ṬABARĪ SAID: We have already mentioned sufficiently the reports of the interpreters that support this interpretation, so there is no need to repeat them here.[4]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:12] *On the day when you will see the believers, men and women, their light shining forth before them and on their right hands, (and will hear it said to them), Glad news for you this day: Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein you are forever. That is the supreme triumph.*

1 This clause is missing from earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar 22:397.

2 This is the opinion of al-Akhfash, who also mentions this verse of poetry; see his *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 2:705.

3 This verse is line 28 of al-Shanfarā's *Tāʾiyya* found in the *Mufaddaliyyāt*; see Charles Lyall, *The Mufaddaliyyāt*, 71; Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals*, 135. Note that Ṭabarī's citation has the verb "to repay" in the future tense, whereas the reading in the *Mufaddaliyyāt* is in the past tense; Ibn al-Anbārī, *Sharh al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, 1:274.

4 Ṭabarī discusses this topic in his commentary on Q.4:40 (not included in this translation).

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of His statement *On the day when you will see the believers, men and women, their light shining forth before them and on their right hands.*

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: *On the day when you will see the believers, men and women, their light* shining (*yuḍīʾu*) *before them and on their right hands.*

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning the verse beginning with *On the day when you will see the believers, men and women*, "It has been mentioned to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) would say, 'Among the believers are some whose light will shine from Medina to Aden of Abyan, even Sana'a[1] and elsewhere, while there are other believers whose light will only shine right in front of them.'"

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from [Muḥammad] ibn Abd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda. Q. 57:12

Ibn al-Muthannā—Ibn Idrīs—my father mentioned that al-Minhāl b. Amr—Qays b. Sakn—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, "The magnitude of their light that is brought to them will be relative to their deeds. Some of them will be brought light the size of a date palm, others the size of a standing man. The smallest size of light is [the size of] a man's thumb, flickering on and off."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *On the day when you will see the believers, men and women*, with their faith and guidance going out *before them*, and their books [of deeds] in *their right hands.*

An account of those who said that:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Their light shining forth before them and on their right hands*, "Their books. God says, *Then whoever is given his written account in his right hand* (Q.84:7). As for *their light*, this refers to their guidance (*hudāhum*)."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion which is most likely to be correct regarding that is the statement which we have mentioned on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk because, had the literal meaning of "shining light" been intended, the sentence would not have been qualified by the words *shining forth before them and on their right hands* without mentioning the left hands.

1 This is a reference to the cities of Aden and Sana'a in Yemen. Abyan is the southern region of Yemen where Aden is located.

The illumination that the believers will be brought in the Hereafter will shine all around them, [not just in front of them and on their right hands]. God's specification (Majestic is His praise) of this sentence to [the light] going forth in front of them and on their right hands, without the left hands, indicates that the intended meaning is not "illumination", because they will be totally immersed in light [on that day].[1]

If what we have described concerning this is correct, then the interpretation of this expression is: *To each God has promised goodness* (Q.57:10) *on the day when you will see* the reward for their faith and righteous deeds of *the believers, men and women, shining forth before them, and on their right hands* are their books recording their deeds, flying about (*taṭāyur*).

The verb *yasʿā* in this verse means "to go forth (*yamḍī*)", and the preposition *bā'* in His statement *bi-aymānihim* means "in (*fī*)".[2] One of the Basran grammarians said: The *bā'* in His statement *bi-aymānihim* means "on (*ʿalā*)".[3]

His statement *On the day when you will see* is coordinated with [*To each God*] *has promised* (Q.57:10). Q. 57:12

INTERPRETATION OF *Glad news for you this day: Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein you are forever*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It will be said to them: O believers, the good news you will receive on this day is *Gardens underneath which rivers flow*, so rejoice in them, *wherein you are khālidīna*. He says: Abiding in the Gardens, without being transferred from them or moving from one [Garden] to another one.

INTERPRETATION OF *That is the supreme triumph*

He says: Their permanent abiding in the Gardens, which He has described, is *the supreme* success they had been seeking, after deliverance from God's punishment and entry into the Garden forever.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:13] *On the day when the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women will say to those who believe, Wait for us that we may borrow from your light! It will be said, Go back and seek for light! Then there will be erected between*

1 Literally, "They will not be free from illumination."
2 This is the opinion of al-Farrā', except that his commentary has *yasʿā* meaning *yuḍīʾ* ("shines"): *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:132.
3 This is close to al-Akhfash's opinion, who says that the *bā'* means *ʿan* ("on"); see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:704.

them a wall wherein is a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy, while the outer side is towards the torment. [57:14] *They will cry out to them, Were we not with you? They will say, Yes, verily; but you tempted one another, and hesitated, and doubted, and vain desires beguiled you until the command of God came to pass; and the Deceiver deceived you concerning God;*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: [*That*] *is the supreme triumph* (Q.57:12) *on the day when the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women will say to those who believe* in God and His Messengers, *Wait for us*. The clause beginning with *On the day* is coordinated with *the triumph* [in the previous verse].

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *Wait for us*. Most of the Medinan and Basran and some of the Kufan reciters read *unẓurūnā* with a *hamzat al-waṣl* [on the *alif*], with the meaning "Wait for us". Most of the Kufans read *anẓirūnā* with a *hamza* on the *alif*, from the [Form IV] verb *anẓara*, with the meaning "Delay us".[1] Al-Farrā' has mentioned that the Arabs say *anẓirnī* when they wish to say "Wait for me for just a short while." Regarding this, he recited the verse of poetry by ʿAmr b. Kulthūm, Q. 57:13

Abā Hindin fa-lā taʿjal ʿalaynā
waʿanẓirnā nukhabbirka'l-yaqīnā

O Abū Hind, do not be so hasty with us!
Give us a breather, and we'll tell the truth to you.[2]

[Al-Farrā'] said: The meaning here is: "Wait for us a short while, so we can inform you," because the meaning here cannot be "to delay, postpone." Rather, it means "listening", like your statement to a man, "Listen to me so I can tell you something."[3]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct reading, in my estimation, is with the *hamzat al-waṣl*, because that is the generally understood meaning of this expression in the speech of the Arabs, which they use when they wish for someone to wait for them. The meaning of "delaying" does not make sense in this context, were one to say *anẓirūnā* with a *fatḥa* on the *alif* and [articulating] its *hamza*.

1 Ibn Atiyya ascribes this reading to Ḥamza, Ibn Waththāb, Ṭalḥa and al-Aʿmash; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:262. He indicates that all of the other reciters read *unẓurūnā*.
2 This is Arberry's translation of this verse; see *The Seven Odes* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 205.
3 The passage beginning with "The Qur'ān reciters disagreed" and ending here is largely found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:133.

INTERPRETATION OF *that we may borrow from your light*

He says: That we may take from your light.

Qabas is a firebrand.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *it will be said, Go back and seek for light!*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: [The hypocrites] will receive a response, for it will be said to them, "*Go back* to where you came from and seek therein *light* for yourselves, for there is no way for you to borrow from our light."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning the passage of His statement from *On the day when the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women will say* until His statement *and a hapless journey's end* (Q.57:15), "When humanity will be in darkness, God will send a light. When the believers see the light, they will turn towards it. The light is a guide from God to the Garden. When the hypocrites see that the believers have set off, they will [begin to] follow them and God will make it totally dark for them. They will say, '*Wait for us that we may borrow from your light!* We were with you in the temporal world.' The believers will reply, 'Go back to the darkness from which you came and seek therein the light.'"

Q. 57:13

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning the verse beginning with *On the day when the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women will say to those who believe*, that Ibn ʿAbbās would say, "When humanity will be in darkness…" and then he repeated the previous report.

INTERPRETATION OF *Then there will be erected between them a wall wherein is a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy, while the outer side is towards the torment*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: God erects *a wall between* the believers and the hypocrites, and this is the barrier between the people of the Garden and the people of Hellfire.

1 The word *qabas* is the root of the verb in this clause, *naqtabis* (*that we may borrow*). Ṭabarī is showing that this verb has a subtle connection to the concept of light and illumination.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *a wall wherein is a gate*, "It is like the partition mentioned in [Sūrat] al-Aʿrāf [The Heights]."[1]

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Then there will be erected between them a wall wherein is a gate*, "The *sūr* is a wall between the Garden and Hellfire."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Then there will be erected between them a wall wherein is a gate*, "This is the wall [about which] God said *and between them is a partition* (Q.7:46)."

It has been alleged that this wall will be in Jerusalem, in the Valley of Gehenna.[2] An account of those who said that:

Q. 57:13

ʿAlī [b. Sahl]—al-Ḥasan b. Bilāl—Ḥammād—Abū Sinān said, "I was with ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās at the Valley of Gehenna [in Jerusalem], and he reported to me that his father [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, concerning *Then there will be erected between them a wall wherein is a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy, while the outer side is toward the torment*, 'This is the place where the wall will be—the Valley of Gehenna.'"

Ibrāhīm b. ʿAṭiyya b. Rudayḥ b. ʿAṭiyya—his paternal uncle Muḥammad b. Rudayḥ b. ʿAṭiyya—Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz—Abū'l-ʿAwwām—ʿUbāda b. al-Ṣāmit would say, concerning *a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy, while the outer side is towards the torment*, "This is the gate of mercy."[3]

Ibn al-Barqī—ʿAmr b. Abī Salama—Saʿīd—ʿAṭiyya b. Qays[4]—Abū'l-Awwām, the *muʾadhdhin* in Jerusalem said, "I heard ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. al-Āṣ say, 'The wall that God mentions in the Qurʾān—*Then there will be erected between them a wall wherein is a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy, while the outer side is towards the torment*—is the Eastern Wall, *the inner side of which* is the mosque, *while the outer side* is the Valley of Gehenna.'"

Muḥammad b. ʿAwf—Abū'l-Mughīra—Ṣafwān—Shurayḥ—Kaʿb [al-Aḥbār] said, concerning the gate that is in Jerusalem, "This is the gate

1 See Q.7:46.

2 The Valley of Gehenna is just east of the Temple Mount/Ḥaram al-Sharīf and west of the Mount of Olives in what is today Occupied East Jerusalem.

3 Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit is one of the few Companions who settled in Jerusalem after the Muslim conquests, so presumably he is indicating the location of the "Gate of Mercy" in his adopted city.

4 Following the emendation made by the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 22:403.

that God mentions in the verse *Then there will be erected between them a wall wherein is a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy, while the outer side is towards the torment.*"

INTERPRETATION OF *wherein is a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: This wall has *a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy while its outer side*, from the direction of that outer side, *is towards the torment*, namely Hellfire.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *while the outer side is towards the torment*, "[Namely,] Hellfire".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *the inner side of which contains mercy*, "The Garden and all that is in it."

Q. 57:13–14

INTERPRETATION OF *They will cry out to them, Were we not with you?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The hypocrites will cry out to the believers, when they are separated from them by the wall, remaining in darkness and torment, while the believers end up in the Garden, "*Were we not with you* in the temporal world, praying and fasting, marrying into your families and inheriting from each other?" He says: The believers will reply, "Yes, you were like that, *but you tempted one another* to act hypocritically." Their tempting one another in this context is [their] hypocrisy.

That is what the interpreters have said. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *fatantum one another*, "Hypocrisy. The hypocrites were with the believers when they were alive, intermarrying with them, visiting them, and enjoying life intimately with them. They were also with them at death, and light was brought to all of them on Resurrection Day. When the hypocrites reached the wall, their light was extinguished, and the two groups were separated [permanently]."

INTERPRETATION OF *and hesitated* (*tarabbaṣtum*)

He says: You postponed belief and repelled affirming [the reality] of God and His Messenger.

Some of the interpreters said something similar to what we just said. An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. Abd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *and hesitated*, "To believe in the Messenger of God (ṣ)." He recited, *Await then! Lo! we are waiting with you* (Q.9:52).

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *tarabbaṣtum*, "They postponed [accepting] the truth[1] and its people."

INTERPRETATION OF *and doubted*

He says: "You doubted the affirmation of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) and the prophethood of Muḥammad (ṣ)," as I have been informed by:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *waʾrtabtum*, "They doubted."

Q. 57:14

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *waʾrtabtum*, "They were in doubt about God."

INTERPRETATION OF *and vain desires beguiled you until the command of God came to pass*

He says: The *vain desires* of your souls deceived you, obstructed you from the way of God and led you astray *until the command of God came to pass*. He says: *Until* God's decrees of your deaths *came to pass* and exterminated you.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *and vain desires beguiled you until the command of God came to pass*, "They were in a state of deception from Satan. By God! They did not cease being in this state until God hurled them into Hellfire."

INTERPRETATION OF *and the Deceiver deceived you concerning God*

He says: Satan deceived you concerning God, and tempted you with [false promises of] deliverance from His punishment and security from His torment.

[1] "The Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*)" is also one of the Names of God, so the phrase could be read as "they postponed [accepting] God and His people."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "*The Deceiver*—in other words, Satan."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *and the Deceiver deceived you concerning God*, "In other words, Satan".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *and the Deceiver deceived you concerning God*, "Satan".

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:15] *So this day no ransom can be taken from you nor from those who disbelieved. Your home is Hellfire; that is most fitting (for you), and a hapless journey's end.*

Q. 57:14-15

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, informing [us] about what the believers will say to the people of hypocrisy, after they have been separated from each other on Resurrection Day: O hypocrites, *this day no ransom*, meaning compensation or substitution, *can be taken from you*. He says: This will not be taken from you as a substitute for your punishment and torment, in order to free you from God's torment. *Nor* will a ransom be taken *from those who disbelieved*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*So this day no ransom can be taken from you nor from those who disbelieved*, meaning the hypocrites and disbelievers."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement, "*So this day no ransom can be taken from you*, the hypocrites, *nor from those who disbelieved* with you. *Your home is Hellfire*."

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *So this day no ransom can be taken from you*. Most of the reciters [everywhere] read yu*'khadhu* with a *yā'*. Abū Jaʿfar, the Qur'ān reciter, read it with a *tā'*.[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The reading which is most likely to be correct is with a *yā'*, even though reading a *tā'* is permissible.

1 Ibn ʿAṭiyya also ascribes this reading to Hishām (from Ibn ʿĀmir), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Abī Isḥāq and al-Aʿraj; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:263.

INTERPRETATION OF *Your home is Hellfire; that is most fitting (for you) (mawlākum), and a hapless journey's end*

He says: Your abode and residence, where you will be settled on Resurrection Day, is Hellfire. It is *mawlākum*. He says: The Hellfire is most fitting for you[1] and *bi'sa'l-maṣīr*. He says: How *hapless is the journey's end* of the person who ends up in Hellfire.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:16] *Is not the time ripe for the hearts of those who believe to submit to God's reminder and to the truth which comes down, that they become not like those who received the Book of old, whose term was prolonged for them and so their hearts were hardened, and many of them are evildoers?*

Q. 57:16

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Is it not time for those who trust in God and His Messenger to soften *their hearts* with *God's reminder* and humble their hearts to Him *and to the truth which is revealed*, which is this Qur'ān that God sent down to His Messenger (ṣ)?

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Is not the time ripe for the hearts of those who believe to submit to God's reminder*, "[For] their hearts to obey."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Yazīd—ʿIkrima said, concerning *a-lam ya'ni for the hearts of those who believe to submit to God's reminder*, ["Is it not time? Or is it not clear?"].[2]

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning the verse beginning with *Is not the time ripe for the hearts of those who believe to submit to God's reminder*, "It has been mentioned to us that Shaddād b. Aws narrated that the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'Truly the first

1 This explanation of *mawlākum* is found in both Abū ʿUbayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān* (2:254) and al-Farrāʾ's *Maʿāni al-Qur'ān* (3:134).

2 Ikrima's statement after the Qur'ānic verse is missing from the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; the Dār Hajar editors provide these two options from other sources; see 2:409.

thing to be removed from humanity is humility (*khushūʿ*).'"[1]

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said: Shaddād b. Aws said, "The first thing to be removed from humanity is humility."

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *and to the truth which comes down*. Most of the reciters, except for Shayba[2] and Nāfiʿ, recited *nazzala* with a *shadda* [on the *zāy*]. Shayba and Nāfiʿ read it as ***nazala*** without the *shadda*.

ṬABARĪ SAID: Both readings are correct, and the reciter will be correct reading either one, on account of their close proximity in meaning.

INTERPRETATION OF *that they become not like those who received the Book of old, whose term was prolonged for them*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Is not the time ripe for* them to *become not*, meaning for those who believe among the community of Muḥammad (ṣ), *like those who received the Book of old*, among the Children of Israel. By the *Book* they received prior to them, He means the Torah and the Gospel. Q. 57:16

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Abū Maʿshar—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said,

> ʿItrīs b. ʿUrqūb came to Ibn Masʿūd, saying "O ʿAbd Allāh, whoever does not command good and forbid wrong will perish." ʿAbd Allāh [b. Mas'ūd] said, "Whoever does not govern his heart with goodness and forbid his heart evil will perish. Truly the Children of Israel, when their *term was prolonged for them and so their hearts were hardened*, created (*ikhtaraʿū*) a book which they put out for all to see. Their hearts were captivated by it, and their tongues considered it lawful. They said, 'We

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found only in ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd's Qur'ānic commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:254. He does not mention its presence here in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. Shaddād b. Aws was a Companion of the Prophet, from among the Helpers, who later settled in Jerusalem after the Muslim conquests; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 3:142. This *isnād* is "interrupted (*munqaṭiʿ*)", as Qatāda indicates that he did not hear this *ḥadīth* directly from Shaddād.

2 Both Ibn ʿAṭiyya and Ibn al-Jazarī ascribe the reading of *nazala* without the *shadda* to Nāfiʿ and Ḥafṣ (from ʿĀṣim); *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:264; and *Nashr*, 2:287. The remaining reciters read it with a *shadda*, although Ibn ʿAṭiyya mentions a few reciters who read it as *nuzzila* in the passive voice.

> will present this book to the Children of Israel—whoever believes in it, we will let be, and whoever rejects it, we will kill.' One Israelite put the [true] Book of God in a quiver (*qaran*),[1] and put the quiver between his breasts. When it was said to him, 'Do you believe in this?' he replied, 'I believe in it,' while indicating with his head the quiver between his breasts. [He added], 'Why should I not believe in this Book?' Among the best religious sects today is the sect (*milla*) of the owner of this quiver."

By His statement *whose term was prolonged for them*, He means: The *term* between [these Israelites] and Moses (ṣ) *was prolonged for them*.[2] *Amad* ("term") here means "time (*zamān*)".

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *al-amad*, "Time". Q. 57:16

INTERPRETATION OF *and so their hearts were hardened, and many of them are evildoers*

And so their hearts were hardened against doing good deeds, which increased the ease by which they disobeyed God, *and many of them are evildoers*. God (Majestic is His praise) says: *And many of* these people who received the Book prior to the Community of Muḥammad (ṣ) *are evildoers* (*fāsiqūn*).

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:17] Know that God revives the earth after its death. We have made clear Our revelations for you, that perhaps you may understand. [57:18] *Lo! those who give alms, both men and women, and lend God a goodly loan, it will be doubled for them, and theirs will be a generous reward.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *Know that God revives* the dead *earth* in which nothing is growing, *after its death*, meaning after its obliteration and effacement. He says: Just as He revives this lifeless earth

1 Following the vocalization and gloss provided by the Dār Hajar editors; 22:410.

2 The Dār Hajar edition fills a small lacuna in this sentence found in earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, 22:410.

after its effacement, He guides the wayward person to truth, granting him success and supporting him with faith, until he becomes a believer after his [period of] disbelief, and rightly guided after his [period of] being astray.

INTERPRETATION OF *We have made clear Our revelations for you, that perhaps you may understand.*

He says: *We have made clear for you* indicators and proofs, so that you will understand.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! those who give alms, both men and women*

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of these words. Most of the reciters of the garrison cities, except for Ibn Kathīr and ʿĀṣim, read [*al-muṣṣaddiqīn wa'l-muṣṣaddiqāt*] with *shadda*s on both the *ṣād* and the *dāl*, with the meaning of "those who give alms, both men and women."[1] The *tā'* gets contracted into the *ṣād*, making the *ṣād* receive a *shadda*. This is like the verse, *O you wrapped up in your raiment* (Q.73:1)—the word *muzzammil* is really *mutazammil* [the Form V active participle].[2]

Q. 57:17-18

Ibn Kathīr and ʿĀṣim read *inna'l-muṣaddiqīn wa'l-muṣaddiqāt* without a *shadda* on the *ṣād*, but with a *shadda* on the *dāl*, with the meaning "those who believe in God and His Messenger, [both men and women]."[3]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: Both readings are well known, each one of them is sound in meaning, and the reciter will be correct reading either one.

The interpretation of this sentence, then, if one reads it with *shadda*s on both letters—I mean the *ṣād* and the *dāl*—would be: *Lo!* those men (*mutaṣaddiqīn*) who give alms from their wealth, and women who give alms, *and lend God a goodly loan*, by spending in His way upon that which He has commanded or recommended them to spend, *it will be doubled for them, and theirs will be a generous reward*. He says: God will double their loans which they have made to Him and repay them in full the value of [these loans] on Resurrection Day, *and theirs will be a generous reward*. He says: They will receive a reward from God for their sincerity and loans to Him, and this [reward] is the Garden.

1 In other words, they are Form V active participles from the root *ṣ-d-q*.

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya affirms that Ibn Kathīr and ʿĀṣim differed in their reading of these words from the majority, although he specifies that only Abū Bakr transmitted this reading from ʿĀṣim; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:265. This explains why the printed Ḥafṣ reading follows the majority opinion, even though Ḥafṣ transmitted his reading from ʿĀṣim as well.

3 In other words, they read these words as Form II active participles of the root *ṣ-d-q*.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:19] And those who believe in God and His Messengers, they are the loyal (folk). And the martyrs are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light; while as for those who disbelieve and deny Our revelations, they are companions of Hellfire.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Those who affirm the oneness of God and His act of sending Messengers, and have faith in them, and believe in all that they bring them from their Lord—*they are the loyal folk* (*ṣiddīqūn*).

INTERPRETATION OF *And the martyrs are with their Lord*

The interpreters disagreed over that.

OPINION: Some of them said: His statement *And the martyrs are with their Lord* is distinct and separate from the preceding clause. In other words, the first idea, beginning with *And those who believe in God and His Messengers,* ends with *they are the loyal* (*folk*). The word *al-ṣiddīqūn* (*the loyal*) is in the nominative case because it is the predicate (*khabar*) of *hum* ("they"). Then, God began a new sentence with *the martyrs* as its subject, saying, *And the martyrs are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light*. The word *shuhadā'* (*martyrs*) is in the nominative case on account [of its being the subject of the predicate] of His statement *they have their reward and their light*.

Q. 57:19

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And those who believe in God and His Messengers, they are the loyal* (*folk*), "This is separated (*mafṣūla*) from *And the martyrs are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light*."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Abū'l-Ḍuḥā—Masrūq said, concerning *And those who believe in God and His Messengers, they are the loyal* (*folk*). *And the martyrs are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light*, "This is exclusively for the martyrs."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Abū'l-Ḍuḥā—Masrūq said, "[The reward and the light] are exclusively for the martyrs."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū'l-Ḍuḥā said, "*They are the loyal* (*folk*). Then a new sentence begins with *And the martyrs are with their Lord*."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And those who believe in God and His Messengers, they are the loyal (folk)*, "This is separate from what follows it. God calls them *the loyal (folk)* because they believe in God and His Messengers. Then He says *And the martyrs are with their Lord*. This is separated."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, His statement ***the martyrs*** is a descriptor of *those who believe in God and His Messengers*. They said: The sentence about *those who believe* ends after His statement ***And the martyrs are with their Lord***. Then a new sentence begins about what is in store for them: ***they have their reward and their light***.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Abū Qays heard Huzayl report, "[People] mentioned the martyrs [in the presence of] ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd], who said, 'The man who fights to be remembered and the man who fights to be seen—they have their place, as do the man who fights for [the goods of] this world, the man who fights for fame, and the man who fights for spoils.' (Shuʿba said something along these lines.) '[Then there is] the man who fights seeking the Face of God and the man who dies on his bed—these are the martyrs.' Then [Ibn Masʿūd] recited, *And those who believe in God and His Messengers, they are the loyal (folk) and martyrs, with their Lord*."

Q. 57:19

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit and Layth—Mujāhid said, concerning *And those who believe in God and His Messengers, they are the loyal (folk) and martyrs, with their Lord*, "Every believer is a martyr." Then he recited this verse.

Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥarb Abū Maʿmar—Ismāʿīl b. Yaḥyā—Ibn ʿAjlān—Zayd b. Aslam—al-Barāʾ b. ʿĀzib said, "I heard the Messenger of God (ṣ) say, 'The believers of my community are martyrs.' Then the Prophet of God (ṣ) recited this verse: *And those who believe in God and His Messengers, they are the loyal (folk) and martyrs, with their Lord*."[1]

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *they are the loyal (folk) and martyrs, with their Lord*, "On account of their own faith in God."

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found only in Ṭabarī's commentary; ***al-Durr al-manthūr***, 6:256.

OPINION: Others said: *The martyrs with their Lord* in this context are the Prophets, who served as witnesses to their communities, as God (Mighty and Majestic is He) says, *How (will it be with them) when We bring of every people a witness, and We bring you (O Muḥammad) a witness against these* (Q.4:41)?[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: The first sentence ends with His statement *they are the loyal (folk)* and His statement *And the martyrs are with their Lord* is a new sentence, beginning with *And the martyrs*.[2] We say: Truly this is the opinion that is most likely to be correct because it is the preponderant apparent meaning of these words and because faith does not automatically grant a believer the status of *shahīd* ("martyr"), except [if it is in conjunction] with another concept, unless what is intended by *shahīd* is "a witness to what he believes and assents". That is a credible interpretation (*wajh*), although it has an element of improbability, because it is not the common usage of this word, when it is unqualified, without any modifiers. Therefore, the interpretation of His statement, *And the shuhadāʾ are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light*, is: *The martyrs* who are killed in the way of God or who perish in His way *are with their Lord; they have* God's reward for them in the Hereafter *and their light*.

Q. 57:19

INTERPRETATION OF *while as for those who disbelieve and deny Our revelations, they are companions of Hellfire (jaḥīm)*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *While as for those who disbelieve* in God *and deny* His indicators and proofs, *they are companions of Hellfire*.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:20] *Know that the life of the world is only play, and idle talk, and pageantry, and boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children; as the likeness of vegetation after rain—the growth is pleasing to the farmer, but afterward it dries up and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes tiny pieces. And in the Hereafter there is grievous punishment, and forgiveness from God and His good pleasure, whereas the life of the world is but a matter of delusions.*

1 This is the opinion of al-Farrāʾ, although he does not cite this Qurʾānic verse; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:135.

2 This is also the opinion of al-Farrāʾ; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:135.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *know* that the goods of the worldly life to which you hasten are only *play and idle talk*, by which you amuse yourselves, *and pageantry*, by which you decorate yourselves, *and boasting among you*. Some of you boast to others about some of the things you have in abundance. [The temporal world is also] *rivalry in respect of wealth and children*. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Some of you vie with one another in respect to the amount of your wealth and number of your children. [The temporal world is] *as the likeness of vegetation after ghayth*, which is rain—*the growth is pleasing to the farmer, but afterward it yahiju*. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Then the plants dry out,[1] *and you see it turning yellow*, after it had been bright green.

INTERPRETATION OF *then it becomes tiny pieces*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Then* these plants *become ḥuṭāman*, which means they become shredded dry plants.

Q. 57:20

INTERPRETATION OF *And in the Hereafter there is grievous punishment, and forgiveness from God and His good pleasure*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*And in the Hereafter there is grievous punishment* for the disbelievers, *and forgiveness from God and His good pleasure* for the people of faith in God and His Messenger," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Know that the life of the world is only play, and idle talk* to the end of the verse, "People will all end up in [one of] these two categories (*harfayn*) in the Hereafter."

One of the experts in the Arabic language[2] said, concerning His statement *And in the Hereafter there is grievous punishment, and forgiveness from God and His good pleasure*: He mentioned what is in the temporal world and it is as He has described. As for the Hereafter, the only [two] outcomes are *grievous punishment* or the Garden. He said: The words "and (*wāw*)" and "or (*aw*)" in [this phrase] can have the same meaning.

INTERPRETATION OF *whereas the life of the world is but a matter of delusions*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, the *pageantry* of this worldly life, to which you hasten, *is but a matter of delusions*.

1 This is also Abū ʿUbayda's gloss on *yahiju*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:254.
2 This is al-Farrāʾ's opinion; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:135.

ʿAlī b. Ḥarb al-Mawṣilī—Muḥāribī—Muḥammad b. ʿAmr—Abū Salama—Abū Hurayra said: the Prophet (ṣ) said, "The smallest space[1] in the Garden is better than the temporal world and all that is in it."[2]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:21] *Race one with another for forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden the breadth of which is as the breadth of the heavens and the earth, which is in store for those who believe in God and His Messengers. Such is the bounty of God, which He bestows upon whom He will, and God possesses the Tremendous Bounty.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *Race one with another for* a deed that will make incumbent upon you *forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden the breadth of which is as the breadth of the heavens and the earth*. This Garden *is in store for those who believe in God and His Messengers*, meaning those who affirm the oneness of God and have faith in His Messengers.

Q. 57:21

INTERPRETATION OF *Such is the bounty of God, which He bestows upon whom He will*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: This Garden, *the breadth of which is as the breadth of the heavens and the earth*, which God prepared *for those who believe in God and His Messengers*, is the bounty of God that He has bestowed upon the believers. God *bestows* His bounty upon whichever creatures *He wills*, and He *possesses the Tremendous Bounty*, [which He bestows] upon them, on account of the provisions He spreads out for them in the temporal world, the delights He grants them, and the proper place of gratitude He teaches them. Then He compensates them in the Hereafter, in accordance with their [degree of] obedience, with that [reward] He has described as having prepared for them.

1 Literally, "the place of a whip (*mawdiʿ sawt*)." Sindī explains that this expression refers to the custom of a rider throwing his whip on the ground to indicate (and reserve) the place he wished to alight; see Ibn Māja, *Sunan Ibn Māja*, ed. Maḥmūd Naṣṣār, 5 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998), 4:577–8. Thus, "the place of the whip" serves as a metaphor for the tiny proportion of the surface area which the whip covers relative to the size of the space where the rider will alight.
2 According to Suyūṭī, in his commentary on Q.2:25, Sahl b. Saʿd al-Sāʿidī's narration of this *hadith* is found in the *Sahihs* of Bukhārī and Muslim and the *Sunans* of Tirmidhī and Ibn Māja; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 1:80.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:22] *No calamity strikes on earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it into being; lo! that is easy for God*

[The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of this verse.]

OPINION: God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *no calamity strikes* you *on earth*, such as drought or crop failure or disease, *or yourselves*, such as fevers and illnesses, *but it is in a Book*, meaning in the Mother of the Book, *before We bring it into being*. He says: Before We bring the souls (*anfus*) into being, meaning "before We create them".[1] One says, "God *bara'a* this thing", with the meaning of "He created it, and He is its Creator."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *No calamity strikes on earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it into being*, "It is something that has already been completed, before we brought the soul into existence." Q. 57:22

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *No calamity strikes on earth*, "As for the calamity on earth, that is intense drought (*sinūn*). As for [the calamity] on yourselves, that is illness and disease. *Before We nabra'a it into being* [means]: 'Before We create it'."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *No calamity strikes on earth*, "This is an intense drought; *or [strikes] yourselves:* fevers and illnesses. It has reached us that nobody is afflicted by deep lines of old age (*khadsh ʿūd*), or a bruised foot, or a congenital trembling (*khalajān ʿirq*), except due to a sin [he has committed]—and that which God forgives is greater [than these sins]."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Manṣūr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān said, "I was sitting with al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī when a man said, 'Ask him about His statement *No calamity strikes on earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it into being*.' I asked him about it and he said, 'Glory to God! Who doubts this? Every calamity in the heavens and earth is

1 Both Abū ʿUbayda and al-Farrāʾ gloss *nabra'a* as *nakhluqa*; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:254; and *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:136.

in the Book of God, before the breath [that gives you life] is created.'"

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *No calamity strikes on earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it into being*, "This is something that has already been completed *before We bring it into being*: Before We bring souls into existence."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement (Majestic is His praise) *But it is in a Book before We bring it into being*, "Before We create it. The calamities, provisions and all the things you love and hate—God has already completed them, all of them, before He brings [your] souls into existence and creates them."

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is: No calamity strikes the religion or the temporal world.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *No calamity strikes on earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it into being*, "[No calamity strikes] the religion (*dīn*) or the temporal world *but it is in a Book before We* create *it*." Q. 57:22

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over the meaning of *fī* that occurs after His statement *illā*.

OPINION: One of the Basran grammarians[1] said: The intended meaning of this, and God knows best, is "except that it is in a Book".[2] The pronoun *hiya* is suppressed, as one can say *ʿindī hadhā laysa illā* ("I have this, only [it]") in which the pronoun *huwa* is understood to follow *illā*.

OPINION: Others among them said: *In a Book* is coordinated with *strikes* [at the opening of the verse], and the implied pronoun *huwa* is meaningless. He said: His example of *ʿindī hadhā laysa illā* is not equivalent to this case because *illā* is not in need of a verb, since it is like saying, "There is none other than it (*laysa ghayruhu*)."[3]

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! that is easy for God*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo!* the creation of souls and counting of all the calamities they will encounter *is* simple, *easy for God*.

1 This is the opinion of al-Akhfash; see his *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:704.
2 Arabic: *illā* hiya *fī kitāb*. The word *hiya* is absent from this Qur'ānic verse. Note that al-Akhfash actually says *huwa*, even though the suffix pronoun affixed to *nabra'a* is feminine.
3 Literally, "None other than it exists."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:23] *That you grieve not for the sake of that which has eluded you, nor yet be joyous because of that which (God) has given you. God loves not all prideful boasters*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, no calamity strikes your property and persons except that it is in a Book, in which it has been written prior to Our creation of your souls, *[so] that you grieve not*. He says: So that you do not become upset *[over] that which has eluded you* from the temporal world, which you did not obtain, *nor yet be joyous because of that which (God) has given you* from [these worldly goods].

If *bi-mā ātākum* is read with a *madda* on the [initial] *alif* [of *ātākum*], the meaning is "Of that which your Lord gave you, delegated to you, and transferred to you. If it is read without the *madda*, its meaning is: "Of that which came to you from [the temporal world]."

Q. 57:23

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*That you grieve not for the sake of that which has eluded you* from the temporal world, *nor yet be joyous because of that which (God) has given you* from it."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Ṭaḥḥān—Isḥāq b. Manṣūr—Qays—Simāk—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *That you grieve not for the sake of that which has eluded you*, "[So that you have] patience in the face of calamity, and gratitude in times of bounty."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Simāk al-Bakrī—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *That you grieve not for the sake of that which has eluded you*, "There is not a single person who does not become sad or happy. Rather, [in adherence to this verse], let him whom a calamity strikes be patient, and he whom goodness strikes be thankful."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning *That you grieve not for the sake of that which has eluded you, nor yet be joyous because of that which (God) has given you*, "Do not *grieve for the sake of that* from the temporal world *which has eluded you, nor yet be joyous because of that which (God) has given you* from it."

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *that which (God) has given you*. Most of the reciters of the Hijaz and Kufa read *bi-mā ātākum* with a *madda* on the [initial] *alif* [of *ātākum*]. Some of the Basrans read

bi-mā atākum without the *madda*.[1] It is as if those who read it without the *madda* on the *alif* chose their reading by taking the preceding [clause] *ʿalā mā fātakum* to mean *of that which has eluded you*, instead of as "*of that which He has made elude you* (*ʿalā mā afātakum*)," in which case the verb refers back to God [as its subject]. [This recital] connects His statement *of that which (God) has given you* to [*that which has eluded you*], but he does not take God to be the subject of the [verb of the latter] statement.

TABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both readings are sound in meaning and that the reciter would be correct reading either one, even though I choose the *madda* reading because of the greater number of reciters who read it this way. The reciter who reads it without the *madda* does not have a strong case on semantic grounds, because he does not make *that which has come to you* the predicate of "God" or anyone else for that matter. There is no possible understanding of this passage, in the ears of the scholars who hear it, other than that this action comes from God (Exalted is He). The elusive worldly good is any worldly thing that eludes someone, and the acquired worldly good is that which is acquired in accordance with what God (Mighty and Majestic is He) has prepared and decreed for him. He (Majestic is His praise) has clarified this for anyone who can grasp it by means of His statement, *No calamity strikes on earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it into being*. He informs [us] that the worldly good that eluded some person [only] eluded him because God caused it to elude him, and that the person who acquires something from [this world] only acquired it because God gave it to him. All of this is written[2] for them *in a Book before* He created them.

Q. 57:23

INTERPRETATION OF *God loves not all prideful boasters*

He says: *God loves not all* people who become arrogant on account of the worldly goods they have been given, and are *boasters* of it to people.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:24] *Who are stingy and who enjoin upon the people avarice. And whoever turns away, still God is the Self-sufficient, the Praised.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *God loves not all prideful boasters,*

[1] Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes the reading of *atākum* without the *madda* exclusively to Abū ʿAmr; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:268.

[2] Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *makhtūṭ* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *maḥfūẓ*; 22:422.

who are stingy with the worldly goods they have received, on account of their pride and boasting of them to other people. They are stingy in paying God's dues, which He has made incumbent upon them, and they are extremely covetous. Furthermore, in addition to their stinginess, they also *enjoin upon the people avarice*.

INTERPRETATION OF *And whoever turns away, still God is the Self-sufficient, the Praised*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Whoever turns away from, in opposition to, God's admonishment, *still God is the Self-sufficient, the Praised*. He (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Whoever turns away from, in opposition to, God's admonishment, shunning the deeds He has summoned him to do, such as spending in His path, while gloating over the worldly goods he has received, full of pride, boastful and stingy—*still God is the Self-sufficient*. [He is in no need] of this person's wealth and spending, or of any of His other creatures, [and He is] *the Praised* [*One*], by His creatures, for the bounties which He has bestowed upon them. Q. 57:24

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over the apodosis (*jawāb*) of His statement *Who are stingy and who enjoin upon the people avarice*.

OPINION:[1] Some of them said: It is unnecessary for there to be an apodosis to this clause because of the many similar phrases throughout the Qur'ān, such as *Had it been possible for a Qur'ān to cause the mountains to move, or the earth to be torn asunder, or the dead to speak* (Q.13:31), which does not have an apodictic clause. God knows best what He has sent down—it is as He revealed it, or how He willed it to be.

OPINION: Other experts in the Arabic language said: The apodictic clause is in the verse that comes prior to [*Those*] *who are stingy and who enjoin upon the people avarice—and* [*he*] *who turns away, still God is the Self-sufficient, the Praised*, so that two coordinated conditional clauses are linked to a single apodosis. [Therefore, the meaning would be, *God loves not all prideful boasters* (Q.57:23) and *those who are stingy and who enjoin upon the people avarice*.] It is like you saying, "If you stand up and if you beautify yourself, I will come to you." The apodosis is not an ellipsis.

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *still God is the Self-sufficient, the Praised*. Most of the Medinan reciters read *fa-inna'llāha'l-ghaniyyu* without the *huwa* in the sentence, and that is how it is written in

1 This is the opinion of al-Akhfash; see his *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:704.

their codices [of the Qur'ān], without the *huwa*.[1] The majority of Kufan reciters read *fa-inna'llāha* huwa*'l-ghaniyyu* with the *huwa*, and that is how it appears in their codices of the Qur'ān.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both of these readings are well known and the reciter will be correct reading either one of them.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:25] *We verily sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that humanity may observe right measure; and We sent down iron, wherein is mighty power and many uses for humanity, and so that God may know him who helps Him and His Messengers, though unseen. Lo! God is Strong, Almighty.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*We verily sent Our Messengers with* detailed statements of the clear exposition and indicators, *and sent down with them the Book* of rulings and laws *and the Balance* of justice," as we have been informed by: Q. 57:25

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *the Book and the Balance*, "*The Balance* is justice."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement, "*And sent down with them the Book and the Balance* in accordance

1 This is one of the relatively few cases in which the orthography of the orthodox Qur'ān readings differs. Usually, the difference between them occurs merely at the level of vocalization (between long and short vowels), which were not written in the earliest copies of the Qur'ān. In conformity with the traditional position, M. M. Al-Aʿẓamī reiterates that the official codices prepared by Caliph ʿUthmān and sent to the major Muslim cities of the time would sometimes differ in cases when equally authentic readings were held to exist, whereby "the inclusion of both [authentic readings] side by side would have only wrought confusion; alternatively, placing one of them in the margin would imply a lesser degree of authenticity." Nonetheless, Al-Aʿzamī points to early studies of these codices that show "all [of the] differences in the Mushafs of Makkah, Madinah, Kūfa, Baṣra, Syria, and ʿUthmān's master copy involve single letters, such as: ي, ت, ا, ... *etc.*, the only exception being the exclusion of هو ('he') in one verse [Q 57:24, as discussed above] where the meaning is in no way affected. These variations amount to no more than forty characters scattered throughout the six Muṣḥafs." See Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Al-Aʿzamī, *The History of the Qur'ānic Text from Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003), 97–102. For more on this topic, see also Abū ʿUbayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 328–33; Yasin Dutton, "Orality, Literary and the 'Seven *Ahruf Hadith*;'" Michael Cook, "The Stemma of the Regional Codices of the Koran," *Graeco-Arabica*, 9–10 (2004): 89–104. Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes the reading without the pronoun *huwa* to Nāfiʿ, Ibn ʿĀmir and the Medinans; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:269.

with what is right (*bi'l-ḥaqq*)." He said, "*The Balance* is what people use: their exchanges of worldly goods and basic necessities by means of it, and that which they take and give. They take by means of a balance, and they give in accordance with a balance, and this is how they know what they take and give. *The Book* contains [the record of] people's custom (*din al-nās*),[1] which is what they do and refrain from doing. *The Book* is for the Hereafter, while *the Balance* is for the temporal world."

INTERPRETATION OF *that humanity may observe right measure*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *That humanity* may act justly among themselves.

INTERPRETATION OF *and We sent down iron, wherein is mighty power*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*And We sent down* to them *iron, wherein is mighty ba's*. He says: *Wherein is mighty* power (*quwwa*), *and many uses for humanity*." This refers to man's beneficial use of it when confronting enemies, as well as other benefits. Q. 57:25

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—ʿIlbā' b. Aḥmar—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "There are three things that came down [to earth] with Adam (may God's blessings be upon him): the anvil and forceps, the hammer, and the blacksmith's forge."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And We sent down iron, wherein is mighty ba's*, "The *mighy ba's* are the swords and weapons which people use to fight [one another], *and many uses for humanity* after [the fighting]—they dig holes in the ground and in the mountains with [iron tools], and other things."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And We sent down iron, wherein is mighty ba's and many uses for mankind*, "Shields and weapons. He sent it down *so that God may know him who helps Him*."

INTERPRETATION OF *and so that God may know him who helps Him and His Messengers, though unseen*

[1] The word *din* in classical Arabic is rich in meanings, as can be seen from its definition in Hava's dictionary, which includes: requital, custom, condition, affair, religion; religious law; sect, Godliness, rebellion, revilement, disease, compulsion, victory, power, authority, management; Hava, 224.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: We sent Our Messengers to Our creatures, and We sent down these things with them in order for them to act justly among themselves, and *for the* party of *God to know who helps* the religion of God *and His Messengers*, *though* He is *unseen* by them.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! God is Strong, Almighty*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo! God is Strong* in His retaliation against those who challenge Him with enmity or who contravene His commands and prohibitions, and *Almighty* in His vengeance against them. No one has the power to avenge the punishment which He has imposed upon them.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:26] *And We verily sent Noah and Abraham and placed the prophethood and the Book among their progeny, and among them there is he who is guided, but many of them disobey.* Q. 57:26

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *and We verily sent Noah* as a Prophet to Our creatures *and Abraham* His Friend[1] to them as a Messenger, *and placed the prophethood and the Book among their progeny*. That is how it was[2]—prophethood was *among their progeny*, and to them the Books were sent down: the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, the *Furqān* and all of the remaining known Books. *And among them there is he who is guided*. He says: *And among* their progeny *there is he who is guided* to the truth, endowed with insight (*mustabṣir*), *but many of them*, meaning "their progeny", *are fāsiqūn*, meaning astray. They leave [the way] of obedience to God for [the way] of disobeying Him.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:27] *Then We caused Our Messengers to follow in their footsteps; and We caused Jesus the Son of Mary to follow, and gave him the Gospel, and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. But monasticism they invented—We ordained it not for them—only seeking God's pleasure, but they observed it not with its proper observance. So We give those of them who believe their reward, but many of them disobey.*

[1] God describes Abraham as His "Friend (*khalīl*)" in Q.4:125.
[2] Following the reading of the Dār Hajar edition; 22:426.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Then We caused *Our Messengers*, whom We sent with clear proofs, *to follow in their footsteps*, and in the footsteps of Noah and Abraham. We caused *Jesus the Son of Mary* to follow *and placed in the hearts of those who followed him*, meaning those who followed Jesus' way (*minhāj*) and law (*sharīʿa*), *compassion*, which is the most intense mercy, *and mercy. But monasticism they ibtadaʿūhā*. He says: They invented it (*aḥdathūhā*). *We ordained it not for them*. He says: We did not make this monasticism obligatory for them, *only seeking God's pleasure*. He says: Rather, *they invented* [monasticism] *seeking God's pleasure, but they observed it not with its proper observance*.

The interpreters disagreed over who are the people who did not observe monasticism *with its proper observance*.[1]

OPINION: Some of them said: They are the people who invented it, yet did not practise it. Rather, they changed and contravened the religion of God with which Jesus was sent, by becoming Christians and Jews.

Q. 57:27 OPINION: Others said: Rather, they are a people that came after the people who invented [monasticism] and did not observe it *with its proper observance* because they were disbelievers who said, "We will act in accordance with what the first ones did." These are the people whom God described as not observing it *with its proper observance*.

The [following] interpreters said something similar to what we have said concerning the interpretation of these words (*aḥruf*) in this context that we have mentioned, the meaning of which the interpreters disagree over.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him*, "These two things come from God, but a group of them invented *monasticism*, which was not ordained for them [by God]. Rather, they invented it while seeking God's pleasure, *but they observed it not with its proper observance*. It has been mentioned to us that they rejected [sexual relations] with women and took up residence in cells."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning the *monasticism they invented*, "It was not ordained for them. *They invented it seeking God's pleasure*."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd [replied to the question]: Why [did they invent monasticism if] *We ordained it not for them*? He

[1] This section of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* is summarized and discussed in Jane McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 263–6.

said, "*They invented it* as a supererogatory means of *seeking God's pleasure, but they observed it not with its proper observance*."

An account of those who said: The people who did not observe monasticism properly were not the people who invented it but, instead, were people who were seeking to emulate them:

Al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥurayth Abū ʿAmmār al-Marwazī—al-Faḍl b. Mūsā—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn Abbās said,

> There were kings after the time of Jesus who modified the Torah and Gospel and there were among them believers who read the [original] Torah and Gospel. Someone said to their king, "We do not find any harsher vilification upon us than the vilification of these people who vilify us by their recitation of *Whoever judges not by that which God has revealed: such are disbelievers* (Q.5:44). These verses are among those they read to censure us, so summon them and make them read the same things we recite, and make them believe in the same things we believe." So, the king summoned and gathered them and presented them with the options of being killed or relinquishing the recitation of the Torah and Gospel, except in the manner in which [the kings] had modified it.[1] They said, "Why do you wish to do that? Leave us alone." One group [of the believers] said, "Build tall columns for us and raise us up on top of them. Then give us something we can use to raise our food and drink up to us. [If you do this], we will not come to you." Another group said, "Let us roam the earth, like a madman, drinking like wild animals. If you come across us in your lands, then kill us." Another group said, "Build dwellings for us in the desert, where we will dig wells and

Q. 57:27

[1] In her summary of this report, Jane McAuliffe identified the king as being sympathetic to the people who recited the original Books and claimed that he forced the falsifiers of the Book to abandon their reading, with the result that the falsifiers, rather than the true believers, invented monasticism; McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 264. I think she has reversed the two groups, and that the falsifiers called on the king to eliminate (or exile) the believers who refused to recite the falsified book, especially in light of the clause *wa-ʿarada ʿalayhim [al-malik] al-qatla aw yatrukū qirāʾata'l-tawrā wa'l-injīl illā mā baddalū minhā*; Dār Hajar 22:429. This reading is also supported by the conclusion of the report, when the descendants of these exiled Torah and Gospel readers embrace Islam at the hand of Muḥammad. One can assume that only the readers of the original Books, rather than the corrupted ones, would have recognized Muḥammad as a true Prophet.

cultivate vegetables. We will not come to you, nor will we interact with you." Every one of these [believers] was sweating [out of fear]. [Ibn ʿAbbās] said: Each of these groups did what they said they would do, so God (Majestic is His praise) sent down, *But monasticism they invented—We ordained it not for them—only seeking God's pleasure, but they*, the later generations, *observed it not with its proper observance*. They said, "We are worshipping in the same manner as so-and-so worshipped, we roam throughout the earth in the same manner as so-and-so roamed, and we take residence in [desert] dwellings, just like so-and-so did." Despite [their claims] to be associating [these practices with their predecessors], they have no sound knowledge of what these people, whom they claim to be imitating, believed. He said: When the Prophet [Muḥammad] (ṣ) was sent, only a few of these people remained—one man came down from his cell, another roamer came in from his roaming, and one man came from his [desert] dwelling—and they [all] believed in [Muḥammad] and had faith in him. Then God (Majestic is His praise) said, *O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger. He will give you twofold of His mercy* (Q.57:28). [Ibn ʿAbbās] said: The two rewards are for their belief in Jesus and faith in the Torah and Gospel, along with their faith and belief in Muḥammad (ṣ). Then he said, *That the People of the Book may know that they control none of the bounty of God, but that the bounty is in God's hand to give to whom He will. God possesses the Tremendous Bounty* (Q.57:29).[1]

Q. 57:27

Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭālib—Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbar—al-Ṣaʿiq b. Ḥazn—ʿUqayl al-Jaʿdī—Abū Isḥāq al-Hamdānī—Suwayd b. Ghafala—ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said,

> The people prior to us divided into seventy-one groups (*firqa*), three of which will be saved [from Hellfire], while the remainder will perish. One of the three groups opposed the kings, fighting them for the religion of God and the religion of Jesus the Son of Mary (may

1 This fascinating non-Prophetic report is also found in Nasāʾī, *Sunan* (*Kitāb ādāb al-qudāh: bāb* 12: *taʾwīl qawl Allāh ʿazza wa-jalla: wa-man lam yaḥkum bi-mā anzala'llāhu faʾūlāʾika humu'l-kāfirūn*).

> God's blessings be upon him) until the kings killed them. [The second] group did not have the strength to oppose the kings, so they stood in the midst of their people, summoning them to the religion of God and the religion of Jesus the Son of Mary (may God's blessings be upon him), until the kings killed them by sawing them into pieces. The [third] group lacked the strength to oppose the kings or to stand up in the midst of their people to summon them to the religion of God and the religion of Jesus (may God's blessings be upon him), so they settled in the wastelands and mountains and became monks there. This [is the background] to God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *But monasticism they invented—We ordained it not for them*. They [became monks] *only seeking God's pleasure, but they observed it not with its proper observance*. He said: Those who came after them *observed it not with its proper observance. So We give those of them who believe their reward*. He said: They are the people who believe in me and have faith in me. He said: *But many of them are evildoers*. He said: They are the people who reject me and deny [the truth of my mission].[1]

Q. 57:27

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *But monasticism they invented—We ordained it not*, "Subsequent religious polytheists, after the earlier generations had been tested,[2] who say, 'We worship in the manner of so-and-so, and we roam in the manner of so-and-so.' They are [lost] in their polytheism, devoid of any knowledge of the faith of the people whom they claim to emulate."

An account of those who said: The people who did not observe [monasticism] properly were the people who invented it:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd

1 According to Suyūṭī, *ḥadīths* similar to this one are also found in the Qurʾānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh; the *Musnad* of Abū Yaʿlā; the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī; the *Nawādir al-uṣūl* of the Sūfī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī; and books by Ṭabarānī and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:258–9. Note that the narration Suyūṭī cites in his commentary has an introductory section that is absent here and states that "the people prior to us" divided into seventy-two sects, rather than seventy-one.

2 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *futina man futina* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *fanā man fanā*; 22:431 (note 3).

al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement beginning with *and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him* until His statement *with its proper observance*,

> [Meaning:] "They did not obey Me in its practice." They discussed it out of disobedience of God, and that is because God (Mighty and Majestic is He) had ordained for them fighting [in the way of God] prior to sending Muḥammad (ṣ). When the people of [true] faith were summoned [to fight], while only a few of whom remained, and the people who associated partners with God multiplied, and the Messengers died or were overpowered, they withdrew into mountainous caves. This was their situation until a party (*ṭāʾifa*) among them disbelieved and abandoned the commands and religion of God (Mighty and Majestic is He) and adopted innovation, Christianity and Judaism. They observed *it* not *with its proper observance*. Another party established itself in accordance with the religion of Jesus the Son of Mary (may God's blessings be upon him) until there came to them clear signs[1] and God (Mighty and Majestic is He) sent Muḥammad (ṣ) as a Messenger. [These are the people to whom] His statement, *O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger! He will give you twofold of His mercy* (until) *God is Forgiving, Merciful* (Q.57:28) [is addressed].

Q. 57:27

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *But monasticism they invented—We ordained it not*, "God (Mighty and Majestic is He) ordained upon them fighting [in His way] before He sent Muḥammad (ṣ). When the people of faith were summoned to fight, while only a few of whom remained, and the polytheists multiplied and the [series] of Messengers came to an end, they withdrew from the people by settling in caves. Things remained like this until a party of them changed and abandoned the religion and commands of God, breaking the covenant He had made with them. They adopted innovations and invented Christianity and Judaism. So God (Mighty and Majestic is He) said to them, *But they observed it not with its proper observance*. Another party of them established itself in accordance with the religion of Jesus (may

1 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *ḥattā jāʾathum al-bayyināt*; 22:432 (note 2).

God's blessings be upon him), until the time that God sent Muḥammad (ṣ), and they believed in him."

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Zakariyyā b. Abī Maryam said, "I heard Abū Umāma al-Bāhilī[1] say, 'Truly God ordained for you fasting the month of Ramaḍān, but He has not ordained staying up [in prayer at night] upon you. This night vigil is something you have invented. Truly some people invented something that was not ordained for them while seeking to obtain God's pleasure. They did not observe it with its proper observance and God censured them for abandoning [the proper observances]." Then he said, *But monasticism they invented—We ordained it not for them—only seeking God's pleasure, but they observed it not with its proper observance.*

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is mostly likely to be sound is to say: Truly the people whom God described as not observing monasticism with its proper observance are some (or one) of the parties (*ṭawāʾif*) who invented it. That is because God (Majestic is His praise) informed us that He gives *those of them who believe their reward*, which indicates that some of them did observe it properly. If there had not been some of them who did this, none of them would have merited the reward God (Majestic is His praise) mentioned: *So We give those of them who believe their reward*. However, the people who did observe [monasticism] with its proper observation might have been of the same time period as those who invented it, or they might have belonged to a subsequent generation. It is possible, according to the speech of the Arabs, to say, "the people did not observe this" with a general meaning, so the people [who did not observe it with its proper observance] could be the descendants of those [who invented it]. The intended meaning of *those of them* (*minhum*) is "some of them who are present", and equivalent cases of this occur in numerous places throughout this book.[2]

Q. 57:27

INTERPRETATION OF *So We give those of them who believe their reward*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: In the Hereafter, We will give those who believed in God and His Messengers, among these people who invented monasticism, their reward for seeking God's pleasure, and for their belief in Him and His Messenger. However, many of these people

1 Abū Umāma Ṣudayy b. ʿAjlān al-Bāhilī was a Companion of the Prophet, who settled in Homs, where he died in 86/705. McAuliffe's death date for him of 231/855 is doubly erroneous, since 231 is 845–846 and Abū Umāma died over a century earlier than that; *Qurʾānic Christians*, 266.

2 The Dār Ḥajar editors refer the reader to Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.2:49 (not included in this translation.)

are disobedient and have forsaken obeying God and having faith in Him.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *So We give those of them who believe their reward*, "The people who observed this practice properly."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:28] O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger! He will give you twofold of His mercy and will appoint for you a light wherein you shall walk, and will forgive you. God is Forgiving, Merciful;

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "O you among the People of the two Books—the Torah and Gospel—who have faith in God and His Messenger, fear God by acting in obedience to Him and shunning acts of disobedience to Him, and believe in His Messenger, Muḥammad (ṣ)," as I have been informed by:

Q. 57:28

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger*, meaning the believers among the People of the Book."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger!*, "He means the believers among the People of the Book."

INTERPRETATION OF *He will give you twofold of His mercy*

He will give you a double reward for your belief in Jesus (ṣ), along with the Prophets prior to Muḥammad (ṣ), and then for your belief in Muḥammad (ṣ), when he was sent as a Prophet.

The original meaning of the word *kifl*[1] is "a portion" or "a share (*ḥaẓẓ*)". Its original meaning is the [pad] that a rider puts on his mount, which secures him and prevents him from falling off of it. One says, "This *kifl* protected you from intense pain (*ʿadhāb*)," just like the *kifl* protected the rider against falling off of his mount.[2]

1 This word appears in the dual form in this verse (*kiflayn*) and is translated as *twofold*.

2 This paragraph is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:137.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū ʿAmmār al-Marwazī—al-Faḍl b. Mūsā—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Aṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "Two rewards: [one] for their belief in Jesus (upon him peace) and faith in the Torah and Gospel; and [a second one] for their belief in Muḥammad and faith in him."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "Two rewards: [one for] their faith in Muḥammad (ṣ) and [the other] for their faith in Jesus (ṣ), the Torah and the Gospel."

[Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān]—ʿAṭāʾ al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās; and from Hārūn b. ʿAntara—his father—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "Two rewards".

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "A double [reward]". Q. 57:28

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Yaʿqūb—Jaʿfar b. Abīʾl-Mughīra—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said,

> The Prophet (ṣ) sent Jaʿfar [b. Abī Ṭālib] with seventy riders to the Negus [in Abyssinia] to invite him [to Islam]. He met him, invited him to Islam, and [the Negus] responded positively, believing in him. When it came time for [Jaʿfar] to leave, the people who also believed in [Muḥammad] in [the Negus'] kingdom—they were forty men—said, "Give us permission to go to this Prophet, so we may convert by [his hand] and can help these [Muslims] cross the [Red] Sea. We are more knowledgeable about this sea than them." [The Negus agreed], and so these Abyssinians came with Jaʿfar and met with the Prophet (ṣ), who was preparing for the Battle of Uhud. When [the Abyssinians] saw the poverty and harsh situation of the Muslims, they asked his permission [to return home], saying, "O Prophet of God, we have wealth [back home] and we see the poverty of the Muslims—if you let us leave, we will return with our wealth in order to ease the Muslims' situation." The Prophet granted them permission to leave, and so [they returned home and] came back [to Medina] with their

wealth, which they [distributed in order] to ease the Muslims' situation. Then God sent down [these verses] regarding them: *Those to whom We gave the Book before it, they believe in it* through His statement *and spend of that which We have provided them* (Q.28:52–4). This refers to the wealth which [these Abyssinians] spent to ease the Muslims' hardships. When the People of the Book who did not believe [in Muḥammad] heard His statement, *These will be given their reward twice over, because they are steadfast* (Q.28:54), they boasted to the Muslims, saying, "O Muslims, if one of us believes in your Book and our Book, he receives his reward twice over, yet if one does not believe in your Book, he receives a single reward, like your reward! What is your superiority over us?" Then God set down: *O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger! He will give you twofold of His mercy*. He will give them their reward two times and increase them in light and forgiveness. Then He said: *That the People of the Book may know that they control none [of the bounty of God]*. (Saʿīd b. Jubayr read *li-kay-lā* here instead of the orthodox *li'allā*.)[1]

Q. 57:28

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "A double [reward]".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "The two *kifl*s are two rewards: [one] for their faith in the first [Book] and [the second for] their faith in that which Muḥammad (ṣ) has brought."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger!*, "He means the believers among the People of the Book and *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*. He says: Two rewards for

1 Saʿīd b. Jubayr is a Successor, which means that this *ḥadīth* is *mursal*. Suyūṭī does not mention it in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, although he does mention a couple *ḥadīth*s which contain fragments of this narrative; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:260.

your faith in the first Book and that which Muḥammad (ṣ) has brought."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "Two rewards: one in the temporal world and the other in the Hereafter."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAnbasa—Abū Isḥāq—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—Abū Mūsā said, concerning *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*, "The two *kifl*s are a double portion of reward. [The word] *kifl* is Ethiopic for 'reward'."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Shaʿbī said, "On Resurrection Day, verily humanity will be in four stations (*manāzil*): [1] the man who was a believer in Jesus and Muḥammad (ṣ) will receive two rewards; [2] the man who was a disbeliever in Jesus but believed in Muḥammad (ṣ) will receive a single reward; [3] the man who was a disbeliever in Jesus and disbelieved in Muḥammad (ṣ) will incur anger upon anger;[1] and [4] the man from among the Arab polytheists who disbelieved in Jesus and died in a state of disbelief prior to Muḥammad will incur anger."

Q. 57:28

Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Walīd—my father said, "I asked Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz about equivalence of the *kifl* [in this verse] and he replied, '350 good deeds.' So the double *kifl* is worth 700 good deeds. Saʿīd said, "Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r) asked a rabbi among the Jews, "What is the greatest increase for a good deed among you?" He said, "A *kifl* is 350 good deeds." Then ʿUmar praised God that He had given us two *kifl*s.' Then Saʿīd mentioned God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) in Sūrat al-Ḥadīd, *He will give you kiflayn of His mercy*. I said to him, 'Are the two *kifl*s promised for the [person who observes properly the] Friday communal prayer (*jumuʿa*) the same as this?' and he said yes."[2]

There is a sound report on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ) which supports what we have said.

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Maʿmar b. Rāshid—Firās—Shaʿbī—Abū Burda b. Abī Mūsā [al-Ashʿarī]—his father [Abū Mūsā] said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Three [groups] of people will be given their reward twice: a man who believes in the first Book and the

1 This echoes Q.2:90: *Evil is that for which they sell their souls: that they should disbelieve in that which God has revealed, grudging that God should reveal of His bounty to whom He will of His servants*. They have incurred anger upon anger. *For disbelievers is a shameful doom*.

2 For the *ḥadīth* about the "two rewards (*kiflān*)" promised those who observe properly the Friday communal prayer, see Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-ṣalāt*: *bāb* 209: *fadl al-jumuʿa*).

last Book; a man who educates his slave girl, making her highly cultured, then frees her to marry her; a slave who devotedly worships His Lord and advises sincerely his owner."[1]

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn Abī Zāʾida—Ṣāliḥ b. Ṣāliḥ al-Hamdānī—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—Abū Burda b. Abī Mūsā—Abū Mūsā [al-Asharī]—the Prophet (ṣ); and from Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Ṣamad—Shuʿba—Ṣāliḥ b. Ṣāliḥ—Shaʿbī—Abū Burda—Abū Mūsā al-Asharī—the Messenger of God (ṣ).

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam—Isḥāq b. al-Furāt—Yaḥyā b. Ayyūb—Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd—Nāfiʿ—ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar said, "I heard the Messenger of God (ṣ) say, 'Your allotted times (*ājāl*), compared to the allotted times of peoples who came prior to you, are like the time between the afternoon prayer and the sunset prayer. The similitude between you and the Jews and Christians is like a man who hires labourers, saying "Who will work from morning until midday, each for a *qīrāṭ*?"[2] Did not the Jews work [this shift]? Then he says, "Who will work from midday until the afternoon prayer, each for a *qīrāṭ*?" Did not the Christians work [this shift]? Then he said, "Who will work from the afternoon prayer until sunset, each for two *qīrāṭs*?" Did you [Muslims] not work [this shift]?'"[3]

Q. 57:28

ʿAlī b. Sahl—Muʾammal—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAbd Allāh b. Dīnār—Ibn ʿUmar said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "The similitude between this community (or he said my community) and the Jews and Christians is like a man who says, 'Who will work for me, from morning until midday, for a *qīrāṭ*?' The Jews said, 'Us', and they worked [that shift]. Then he said, 'Who will work for me from midday until the afternoon prayer for a *qīrāṭ*?' The Christians said 'Us', and they worked [that shift]. [The Prophet said]: You are the Muslims who work from the afternoon prayer until night for two *qīrāṭs*, which infuriated the Jews and Christians, who said, 'We have worked more for less pay!' The man [who hired them] said, 'Have you been short-

1 According to Suyūṭī, in his commentary on Q.28:55, Abū Mūsā's *hadith* is also found in the *Sahihs* of Bukhārī and Muslim; the *Sunans* of Tirmidhī, Nasāʾī and Ibn Māja; the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal; the Qurʾānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh; and Bayhaqī's *al-Sunan al-kubrā*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:253.

2 Literally, *alā qīrāṭin qīrāṭin*. The word *qīrāṭ* means "carat" and is equivalent to the weight of four grains or 1/24 of a gold dīnār; Hava, 599.

3 Variations of this *hadith* and the one which follows it are found in Bukhārī's *Sahih* (*Kitāb mawāqīt al-salāt*: *bāb* 17: *man adraka rak a min al-ʿasr qabla'l-ghurūb* and elsewhere) and in Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*; see Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿazīm*, 4 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1995), 4:340.

changed anything from your salaries?' They replied no. The man said, 'This is my bounty; I give it to whomever I will.'"[1]

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—al-Layth [b. Saʿd] and Ibn Lahīʿa—Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—al-Qāsim b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Abū Umāma al-Bāhilī said, "I witnessed the sermon delivered by the Messenger of God (ṣ) at the Farewell Pilgrimage, in which he said many beautiful words, among which were the following: 'Whoever among the People of the two Books converts to Islam will receive his reward twice—he will have the equivalent portion we will have, and he will be held accountable for [his bad deeds] in a similar manner to how we will be held accountable.[2] Whoever among the polytheists converts to Islam will have the equivalent [reward] that we will have, and he will be held accountable in a similar manner to how we will be held accountable.'"[3]

INTERPRETATION OF *and will appoint for you a light wherein you shall walk*

The interpreters disagreed over what is meant by *light* in this context.

Q. 57:28

OPINION: Some of them said: What is meant by that is the Qurʾān.

An account of those who said that:

Abū ʿAmmār al-Marwazī—al-Faḍl b. Mūsā—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Aṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *and will appoint for you a light wherein you shall walk*, "The Qurʾān[4] and their act of following the Prophet (ṣ)."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *and will appoint for you a light wherein you shall walk*, "The *Furqān* and their act of following the Prophet (ṣ)."

Abū Kurayb and Abū Hishām—Yaḥyā b. Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *and will appoint for you a light wherein you shall walk*, "The Qurʾān".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ—Saʿīd [b. Jubayr].

1 This narration from Sufyān al-Thawrī—ʿAbd Allāh b. Dīnār—Ibn ʿUmar of the previous *hadith* is found in Bukhārī's *Sahih* (*Kitāb faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*: *bāb* 17: *faḍl al-Qurʾān ʿalā sāʾir al-kalām*).

2 Arabic: *lahu mithlu'lladhi lanā wa- alayhi mithlu'lladhi ʿalaynā*. This sentence echoes somewhat the last verse of Sūrat al-Baqara (2): *For it* [i.e. each soul] *(is only) that which it has earned, and against it (only) that which it has deserved*.

3 According to Suyūṭī, a highly abbreviated variation of this *hadith* is found in the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal and in one of Tabarānī's books; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:253.

4 Following the Dār Hajar editors' reading of *Qurʾān* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *Furqān*; 22:441.

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by *light* in this context is "guidance (*hudā*)".

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *wherein you shall walk*, "Guidance".

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is to say: Truly God (Exalted is His remembrance) promised these people that He would appoint for them a light wherein they shall walk. The Qur'ān, along with the act of following [the example] of the Messenger of God (ṣ), are lights for whomever believes in both of them and has faith in them, as well as a form of guidance, because whoever believes in [God and Muḥammad] will be guided.

Q. 57:28-9

INTERPRETATION OF *and will forgive you. God is Forgiving, Merciful*

He says: *And will* absolve *you* of your sins, concealing them, and *God is Forgiving, Merciful*. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: God is Possessor of forgiveness and mercy.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[57:29] *That the People of the Book may know that they control none of the bounty of God, but that the bounty is in God's hand to give to whom He will. God possesses the Tremendous Bounty.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to the believers in Him and in Muḥammad (ṣ), from among the People of the Book: Your Lord does this to you so that the *People of the Book may know that they control none of the bounty of God* that He has given and restricted to you because they thought that God had favoured them over all other people. So, God (Majestic is His praise) informs [the People of the Book] that He has given the community of Muḥammad (ṣ) some of [His] bounty (*faḍl*) and honour, which He did not give to them, and that the People of the Book were envious of the believers (Muslims) [in the previous verse] when His statement came down: *O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger! He will give you twofold of His mercy and will appoint for you a light wherein you shall walk, and will forgive you. God is Forgiving, Merciful.* God (Mighty and Majestic is He) says: I did this so

that the People of the Book would know that they control none of *the bounty of God*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said,

> When the verse beginning with the words, *O you who believe, be conscious of your duty to God and put faith in His Messenger*, came down, the People of the Book became envious of the Muslims, so God (Mighty and Majestic is He) sent down the verse beginning with the words, *That the People of the Book may know that they control none.* It has been mentioned to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) used to say, "The similitude between you and the people of the two previous Books is like that of a man who hired labourers to work until night for a *qīrāṭ* and when the middle of the day came, they become fatigued and bored, so he compensated them and gave them one half *qīrāṭ*. Then he hired some more workers to work until the night for a single *qīrāṭ*, and they worked until the afternoon prayer, became fatigued and bored, so he compensated them and gave them [one *qīrāṭ*]. Then he hired workers to work until the night for two *qīrāṭ*s and they completed the remainder of his job. It was said to him, 'Why is it that these people who worked less [than us] received a greater payment?' He said, 'What does it matter to me if I give to whomever I wish [to give]?'" [The Prophet] said, "I hope that we are among the recipients of the two *qīrāṭ*s."[1]

Q. 57:29

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "It has reached us that when the verse *He will give you twofold of His mercy* came down, the People of the Book became envious of the Muslims. Then God sent down *that the People of the Book may know that they control none of the bounty of God*."

Abū ʿAmmār—al-Faḍl b. Mūsā—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*That the People of the Book* who are listening *may know that they control none of the bounty of God.*"

[1] This is a *mursal* variation of a *ḥadīth* transmitted from Ibn ʿUmar that Ṭabarī cited in his commentary on the previous verse.

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās.

It has been alleged that the expression *liʾallā yaʿlama* means the same as *li-yaʿlama*.[1] It has been alleged that the [irregular] reading of ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] was *li-kay yaʿlama*, because the Arabs can put *lā* as a prefix or suffix to any word as a non-literal negation (*jaḥd ghayru muṣarraḥ*).[2] For example, His statement *mā manaʿaka allā tasjuda idh amartuka*, means *What hindered you from falling prostrate when I bade you* (Q.7:12)?[3] Likewise, consider His statement *Who would notify you all if such (signs) came to them and then they became believers* (Q.6:109)?[4] And His statement *No community destroyed by Us can escape its return* (21:95).[5] This [last verse] means: "We destroyed them so they will come back."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Q. 57:29

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Hārūn al-Ghanawī said, "Khaṭṭāb b. ʿAbd Allāh read *liʾallā People of the Book may know that they control none of the bounty of God.*" Ibn ʿUlayya said, on the authority of Abūʾl-Muʿallā, that Saʿīd b. Jubayr read *li-kay-lā People of the Book may know.*

INTERPRETATION OF *but that the bounty is in God's hand to give to whom He will*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: It is for them to know that *the bounty is in God's hand*, not in theirs or the hands of any other creature, *to give to whom He will*. He says: He gives His bounty to whomever He wills from among all creatures. This power is not vested with anyone except Him.

1 This is the opinion of Abū ʿUbayda; see *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:254. The problem Ṭabarī is addressing here is the addition of the negative particle *lā*, which is a suffix to this compound particle of *li-an-lā*. If read literally, this verse would say "that they would *not* know that they control none of the bounty of God," which is clearly not its intended meaning. In other words, the particles *an* and *lā* seem to be superfluous to the particle *lām*. Al-Akhfash also disregards the negative particle and says that this expression just means *liʾan yaʿlama*; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:704–5.

2 This sentence and all three examples are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:137.

3 If the *lā* were read literally in this verse, it would mean "What hindered you from not prostrating," which does not make sense in this context.

4 Most translators, such as Pickthall, Abdel Haleem and Asad, take this *lā* as a literal negation, *pace* al-Farrāʾ and Ṭabarī. For example, Pickthall has (*so is*) *that which telleth you that if such came unto them they would not believe.*

5 This is Abdel Haleem's translation, although he states that some interpreters have read the *lā* as a literal negation; see Abdel Haleem, 207, note f.

INTERPRETATION OF *God possesses the Tremendous Bounty*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: God possesses *the bounty* for His creation and His bounty is *tremendous*.

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Ḥadīd

Q. 57:29

THE GATHERING
SŪRAT AL-ḤASHR
(Q. 59:18–24)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[59:18] *O you who believe, be conscious of God, and let every soul look to what it sends forth for the morrow! And be conscious of God. Lo! God is Aware of what you do!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O you who have faith in God and affirm His oneness, *be conscious of God* by fulfilling His obligations and avoiding acts of disobedience to Him. *And let every soul look to what it sends forth for the morrow*. He says: Let each one of you look to what deeds he will bring forth on Resurrection Day—are they righteous deeds, which will save him, or wicked deeds, which will damn him?

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *be conscious of God, and let every soul look to what it sends forth for the morrow*, "Your Lord continues to bring the Last Hour closer and closer until He makes it like *the morrow*. *The morrow* is Resurrection Day."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*What it sends forth for the morrow*, meaning Resurrection Day."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *what it sends forth for the morrow*, "In other words, Resurrection Day".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd recited the words of God (Mighty and Majestic is He), *and let every soul look to what it sends forth for the morrow*, and said, "The good and bad [deeds it sends forth] on

Resurrection Day. 'Yesterday' is the temporal world and 'tomorrow' is the Hereafter." Then he recited *as if it had not flourished yesterday* (Q.10:24) and said, "*As if it had not* been in the temporal world."

INTERPRETATION OF *And be conscious of God. Lo! God is Aware of what you do!*

He says: And fear God by fulfilling His obligations and avoiding acts of disobedience to Him. *Lo! God is Aware of what you do!* He says: Truly God possesses awareness and knowledge of your deeds—both the good and the bad among them. None of them is concealed from Him, and He will requite you for them altogether.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[59:19] *And be not like those who forgot God and so He caused them to forget their selves; such are the evildoers.*

Q. 59:19

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And be not like those who* abandoned fulfilling God's claims that He made obligatory upon them *and so He caused them to forget their selves*. He says: God made them forget their shares (*ḥuẓūẓ*) of goodness [from Him].

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *who forgot God and so He caused them to forget their selves*, "They forgot God's claim [against them], *so He caused them to forget their selves*. He said: Their share [of happiness]."

INTERPRETATION OF *such are the evildoers*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: These people who forgot God *are the evildoers* (*fāsiqūn*), meaning they left the [realm] of obeying God for the [realm] of disobeying Him.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[59:20] *Not equal are the companions of Hellfire and the companions of the Garden. The companions of the Garden, they are the triumphant.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The people of Hellfire are not equal to those of the Garden, for the people of the Garden *are the trium-*

phant, meaning they will obtain what they sought and desired, and escape from what they feared.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[59:21] *If We had caused this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain, you truly would have seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God. Such similitudes We coin for humanity, so perhaps they may reflect.*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: *If We had caused this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain*, which is of rock, *you*, O Muḥammad, *truly would have seen it humbled*. He says: Abased, *rent asunder by the fear of God*, despite its hardness, out of fear of not fulfilling God's obligatory claim to glorify the Qur'ān. Instead, [the Qur'ān] was sent down to the son of Adam, who seeks to lighten His claim and turn away from its lessons and reminders, *as if he did not even hear it or as if there is deafness in his ears* (Q.31:7).

Q. 59:20–1

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—his father—his uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—his father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-'Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *If We had caused this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain, you truly would have seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God* until His statement *that perhaps they may reflect*, "[God] says: Had I sent down this Qur'ān upon a mountain and made it carry it, it would have been rent asunder and humbled by its weight and the fear of God. When the Qur'ān was sent down to them, God (Mighty and Majestic is he) commanded humanity to take it with intense fear and humility. He said: Thus God coins similitudes for humanity, so perhaps they may reflect."[1]

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning the verse beginning with *If We had caused this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain, you truly would have seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God*, "God excuses the deaf mountain, but He does not excuse the wretched (*shaqiyy*) human. Have you ever seen anyone's ribs rent asunder out of fear of God?"

INTERPRETATION OF *Such similitudes We coin for humanity, so perhaps they may reflect*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: These things We make as compar-

1 The first half of this sentence is from Q.13:17, while the second half is from Q.59:22.

isons for humanity. This is His way (Majestic is His praise) of informing them that the mountains are greater in their glorification of God, in accordance with His claim, than them, despite [the mountains'] hardness and rigidity. *So perhaps they may reflect*. He says: God coins these similitudes for them so that they can reflect upon them and then repent and live in accordance with the truth.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[59:22] *He is God; there is no god but He; Knower of the Unseen and the visible. He is the Beneficent, Merciful.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) means: O humanity, the One Who causes the mountain to rend asunder out of fear of Him is the One Who is to be worshipped. Worship and divinity are not appropriate for anyone other than Him, who is *Knower of the Unseen* in the heavens and earth and the Witness (*al-Shāhid*) of what is visible and perceivable in them. *He is the Beneficent, Merciful*. He says: *He is the Beneficent* in the temporal world and Hereafter, *Merciful* with the people who have faith in Him.

Q. 59:22–3

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[59:23] *He is God; there is no god but He: the King, the Blessed,[1] the Safe,[2] the Guarantor of Security, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Sublime. Glory be to God, above all partners they associate (with Him)!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He is the One Who is to be worshipped—worship of anyone save Him is incorrect. [He is] *the King*, above whom there is no other king. Nothing exists save that it is beneath Him. [He is] *al-Quddūs*, which is said to mean "the Blessed" (*al-Mubārak*).

ṬABARĪ SAID: I have clarified, in an earlier place in this book, the meaning of *taqdīs* ("to make holy, sanctify") by bringing forth the evidence and mentioning the disagreements over it in a manner that would make its repetition superfluous.[3]

An account of those who said: What is meant by this is "the Blessed":

1 Pickthall translates the name *al-Quddūs* as "the Holy One"; Arberry has "the All-holy"; and Muhammad Asad has "the Holy". My translation of it as *the Blessed* follows Ṭabarī's interpretation.
2 Pickthall translates the name *al-Salām* as "Peace"; Arberry has "All-peaceable"; and Abdel Haleem has "Source of Peace". My translation of it as *the Safe* follows Ṭabarī's interpretation.
3 See Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.2:30 (not included in this translation).

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*The Quddūs* is, in other words, the Blessed."

INTERPRETATION OF *the Safe*

He says: "He is the One from whom His creation is safe (*yaslamu*) from His injustice (*zulmihi*)," and it is one of His Names, as we have been informed by:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *the Salām*, "God is *The Salām*."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā Wāḍiḥ—ʿUbayd Allāh al-ʿAtakī—Jābir b. Zayd said, concerning His statement *the Salām*, "This is God."

ṬABARĪ SAID: I have already mentioned the reports related to the meaning of *al-Salām* and clarified its meaning with the relevant evidence, so it is superfluous to repeat it here.[1]

Q. 59:23

INTERPRETATION OF *the Guarantor of Security*

God means by *the Muʾmin*:[2] The One Who protects His creation (*yuʾamminu khalqahu*) from His injustice.

Qatāda said, concerning that, what we have been informed of by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *the Muʾmin*, "He guarantees that His speech is true (*āmana li-qawlihi annahu ḥaqq*)."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *the Muʾmin*, "He guarantees His speech."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Juwaybir—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "*The Muʾmin* is the One Who confirms as true (*muṣaddiq*)."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *the Muʾmin*, "*The Muʾmin* is the One Who confirms as true and the One Who makes something certain (*mūqin*). People believe in their Lord and He calls them 'believers'. The Generous Lord protects them on account of their faith. He confirms as true that He calls them by that name."

INTERPRETATION OF *the Guardian*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *the Muhaymin* (*the Guardian*).

1 See Tabarī's commentary on Q.5:16 (not included in this translation).
2 The word *muʾmin* generally means "believer" when applied to humans; as we see here, Ṭabarī draws on its meaning "to protect".

OPINION: Some of them said: The *Muhaymin* is the Witness (*al-Shahīd*).

An account of those who said that:

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *the Muhaymin*, "The Witness". Another time, he said, "The Truthful (*al-Amīn*)".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *the Muhaymin*, "The Witnes".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *the Muhaymin*, "God (Mighty and Majestic is He) sent down a Book and He witnessed [its veracity]."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *the Muhaymin*, "The Witness to [its veracity]."

Q. 59:23

OPINION: Others said: *The Muhaymin* is the Truthful (*al-Amīn*).

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Juwaybir—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "*The Muhaymin* is the Truthful."[1]

OPINION: Others said: *The Muhaymin* is the One Who confirms as true (*muṣaddiq*).

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *the Muhaymin*, "He confirms as true all that has happened." [Ibn Zayd] recited *wa-muhayminan ʿalayhi* (Q.5:48) and said, "The Qurʾān confirms as true all the Books that preceded it, and God confirms as true all that He has said happened in the past in the temporal world, all that has remained, and all that He has said regarding the Hereafter."

ṬABARĪ SAID: I have already clarified the opinion that is most likely to be correct in the earlier discussion of Sūrat al-Māʾida (the Table Spread; 5), along with the evidence in support of its soundness, so it is unnecessary for its repetition at this place.[2]

1 This is also the interpretation adopted by the Muʿtazilī Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī; see Abūʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, 2:215.
2 Ṭabarī identifies the root meaning of *muhaymin* as "to preserve or watch over carefully" in his commentary on Q.5:48. He includes numerous reports regarding the three interpretations of this word there as well.

INTERPERETATION OF *the Mighty*

He is severe in His vengeance with those of His enemies upon whom He takes vengeance, as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*The Mighty* in His vengeance when He exacts revenge."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*The Mighty* in His vengeance when He exacts revenge."

INTERPRETATION OF *the Compeller*

He means the One Who restores to goodness (*muṣliḥ*) the affairs of His creatures; the One Who grants them (*muṣarrif*)[1] the right to dispose with what is good for them. Qatāda would say, "God compels (*jabara*) His creatures in the way He wills, in accordance with His Command."

Q. 59:23 [Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *the Compeller*, "He compels His creatures in the way He wills."

INTERPRETATION OF *the Sublime*

It has been alleged that what is meant by [*the Sublime* (*al-Mutakabbir*)] is that He elevates Himself (*takabbara*) above every evil.[2]

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *the Sublime*, "He elevates Himself above every evil."

A nearly identical report as narrated to us from [Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda.

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—a man—Jābir b. Zayd said, "Truly the greatest name of God is Allāh. Have you not heard Him say, *He is God; there is no god but He; Knower of the Unseen and the visible. He is the Beneficent, Merciful. He is God; there is no god but He: the King, the Blessed, the Safe, the Guarantor of Security, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Sublime.*"

1 The Dār Hajar and Halabī editions have *al-muṣarrifahum* which is grammatically incorrect. The correct form in this context should be *muṣarrifahum* or *al-muṣarrifa iyyāhum*; see *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 28:55; and 22:554 of the Dār Hajar edition (which erroneously has *muṣarrif* in the nominative case instead of the accusative case).

2 The Arabic word *mutakabbir*, when applied to humans, means "arrogant or haughty", which would sound strange to be included among the most beautiful Names of God. Thus, exegetes had to offer an alternative interpretation of this adjective with respect to God.

INTERPRETATION OF *Glory be to God, above all partners they associate (with Him).*[1]

He says: God is disassociated from and free of the partners the polytheists associate with Him.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[59:24] *He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. To Him belong the most beautiful Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He is the One Who is to be worshipped, *the Creator*. Worship of anyone other than Him is incorrect, and there is no creator save He. [He is] *the Maker* (*al-Bāriʾ*), Who makes creatures and brings them into existence by means of His power, and *the Fashioner* (*al-Muṣawwir*) of His creatures however He willed and however Q. 59:24 He wills.

INTERPRETATION OF *To Him belong the most beautiful Names*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: To God belong *the most beautiful Names*, and these are the names by which God has called Himself and mentioned in these two verses.

INTERPRETATION OF *All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise*

He says: *All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him* together, and they prostrate to Him, either willingly or unwillingly. *And He* is *the Mighty*. He says: He is severe in His vengeance against His enemies; and *the Wise*, in His management of His creation and His directing them to what is good for them.

[*Conclusion of the commentary on verses 18–24 of Sūrat al-Ḥashr*]

1 Following the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, which indicates that this clause is not part of the preceding report; 22:555.

SOVEREIGNTY
SŪRAT AL-MULK
(Q. 67:1–30)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:1] *Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Sovereignty, and He is powerful over everything,* [67:2] *Who has created life and death so that He may try you—which of you is best in conduct; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving*

By His statement *Blessed*, God (Exalted is His remembrance) means: Magnified and exalted *is He in Whose hand is the Sovereignty*. In His hand is the Sovereignty over the temporal world and the Hereafter. His power (*sulṭān*) extends over both realms, in which His command and His decree are executed. *And He is powerful over everything*. He says: *And He* has the capacity (*qudra*) to do whatever He wills; nothing can prevent Him from doing anything, and no incapacity can intervene between Him and His action.

INTERPRETATION OF *Who has created life and death so that He may try you—which of you is best in conduct*

Concerning His statement *Who has created life and death*: He causes to die whomever and whatever He wills, and bestows life upon whom and what He wishes, for the fixed duration, *so that He may try you—which of you is best in conduct*. He says: So that He might test you, O humanity, and see which of you are most obedient and hasten most quickly in pursuit of His pleasure.

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Who has created life and death*, "God brings low the son of Adam with death. He made the temporal world the abode of living and passing away, and He made the Hereafter the abode of recompense and permanence."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Who has created life and death so that He may try you,*

"It has been alleged that the Prophet of God (ṣ) would say, 'God brings low the children of Adam by means of death.'"[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving*

He says: He is the Strong (*al-Qawī*), severe in His vengeance against anyone who disobeys Him or goes against His command. [And He is] *the Forgiving* of the sins of anyone who turns towards Him and repents from his sins.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:3] *Who has created seven heavens in layers. You cannot see any fault in the Beneficent's creation; then look again: Can you see any rifts?* [67:4] *Then look again and yet again, your sight will return to you weakened and made dim.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, informing people of His nature (*ṣifatihi*): *Who has created seven heavens in layers*, layer upon layer, some of them above others. Q. 67:2-3

INTERPRETATION OF *You cannot see any fault in the Beneficent's creation*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: *You cannot see in the Beneficent's creation*, which He created—neither in the sky nor on earth, nor anywhere else—*any tafāwut*, meaning "inconsistency (*ikhtilāf*)."

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *You cannot see any tafāwut in the Beneficent One's creation*, "You cannot see any inconsistency in it."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *any tafāwut*, "Any inconsistency".

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *any fault*. Most of the Medinan and Basran reciters, along with some of the Kufans, read *min-tafāwut* with an *alif*. Most of the Kufan reciters read *min-tafawwut*, with a *shadda* on the *wāw* and without an *alif*.[2]

1 According to Suyūṭī, variations of this *mursal ḥadīth* are also found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:382.

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes the reading of *tafāwut* to the majority of reciters and the reading of *tafawwut* to Ḥamza, Kisāʾī, Ibn Masʿūd, ʿAlqama, al-Aswad, [Saʿīd] ibn Jubayr, Ṭalḥa and al-Aʿmash; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:338.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both readings are widely known and have the same meaning. This is like saying *lā tuṣaʿʿir* or *lā tuṣāʿir* ("Do not turn away"), or *taʾahhadtu fulānan* or *taʾāhadtuhu* ("I took care of so-and-so"), or *tazahhartu* or *tazāhartu* ("I appeared").[1] Likewise, *tafāwut* and *tafawwut* [mean the same thing].

INTERPRETATION OF *then look again: Can you see any rifts?*

He says: "*Look* again: *Can you see* any cracks or gaps?" This comes from God's statement, *Almost might the heavens above be rent asunder* (*yatafaṭṭarna*) (Q.42:5), which means: "split open and develop cracks". The word *rifts* (*futūr*) is the verbal noun of [the verb] *fatara futūran*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Can you see any futūr*, "The *futūr* are 'gaps'."

Q. 67:4

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Can you see any futūr*, "O Son of Adam, *can you see any* gaps?"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *any futūr*, "Any gaps."

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *Can you see any futūr*, "Any cracks".

INTERPRETATION OF *Then look again and yet again, your sight will return to you weakened and made dim*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: O Son of Adam, return your gaze twice, one time after another, and look—*Can you see any rifts* or *faults? Your sight will return to you weakened*. He says: Your sight will return to you reduced, having travelled a great distance.

The word *khāsiʾ* comes from the Arab custom of saying *ikhsaʾ* to a dog when they drive it away, meaning: "Go far away, in ignominy!"

And [*your sight will be*] *made dim*. He says: It will be weary, languid.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd

1 Most of this sentence is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:170.

al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Then look again and yet again*, "[God] says: 'Do you see any gaps in the sky?' *Your sight will return to you weakened and made dim* by the blackness of night."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣālih [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *khāsiʾan and made dim*, "Abased". Concerning His statement *and made ḥasīr*, "Trembling".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Your sight will return to you khāsiʾan*, "In other words, tired; *and made ḥasīr*: wearied (*muʿyin*)."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *khāsiʾan*, "Weakened"; *and made ḥasīr*, "Weary from not seeing any gaps or faults."

Some of them said: *khāsiʾ* and *ḥasīr* are identical [in meaning].

An account of those who said that:

Q. 67:5

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *then look again: Can you see any rifts* (until the end to the passage), "The words *khāsiʾ* and *ḥāsīr* are identical. His eye grows tired from looking at the sky for rifts. He returns his glance and becomes tired prior to seeing a single rift. When Resurrection Day comes, the sky will split open and crack, and then an even greater event will occur—it will be torn off (*inkashatat*)."[1]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:5] And verily We have beautified the world's heaven with lamps, and We have made them projectiles for the satans, and for them We have prepared the doom of flame.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And verily We have beautified the world's heaven with lamps*, which are the stars. He made them [like] lamps for the purpose of illumination. Likewise, the word for "morning" is *ṣubḥ* due to its illumination for humanity during the daytime.[2] *And We have made them projectiles for the satans*. He says: *We have made* the lamps, by which *We have beautified the world's heaven, projectiles for the satans*, who are struck by them.

1 See Q 81:11, which reads, *And when the sky is torn away* (*kushitat*).

2 The word *ṣubḥ* ("morning") is related etymologically to the word for "lamps (*masābīḥ*)" in this verse.

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And verily We have beautified the world's heaven with lamps, and We have made them projectiles for the satans*, "Truly God (Majestic is His praise) created these stars for three purposes. He made them a decoration for the earth's sky, *projectiles for the satans*, and markers by which [travellers] are guided. Anyone who interprets this differently is only proffering a speculative opinion (*raʾy*), and has wronged himself, squandered his future reward, and has undertaken [to explain] that of which he has no knowledge."

INTERPRETATION OF *and for them We have prepared the doom of flame*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: *We have prepared* for the satans in the Hereafter *the doom of flame*. The flame is kindled upon them and they are roasted.

Q. 67:6-7

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:6] *And for those who disbelieve in their Lord there is the doom of Gehenna, a hapless journey's end!* [67:7] *When they are flung therein they hear its roaring as it boils up*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And for those who disbelieve in their Lord* Who created them in the temporal world, *there is the doom of Gehenna* in the Hereafter—*a hapless journey's end!* He says: *The doom of Gehenna is a hapless journey's end!*

INTERPRETATION OF *When they are flung therein they hear its roaring as it boils up*

When they are flung therein, meaning the moment when the disbelievers are flung into Gehenna, *they hear its*—meaning Gehenna's—*roaring*. The word *shahīq* (*roaring*) is the harsh sound that comes out of the belly, like the braying of a donkey, as Ruʾba said, describing a donkey,

hashraja fiʾl-jawfi sahilan aw shahaq
hattā yuqāla nāhiqun wa-mā nahaq

[The donkey's] voice was stiffled in his throat, a braying from his chest or hard inhalation,
Until it was almost a bray, though he brayed not.

[Regarding God's statement] *wa-hiya tafūr*, He says: *It boils up*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mujāhid said, concerning *When they are flung therein they hear its roaring as it boils up*, "It boils, like the boiling of an earthen pot."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:8] *As it would nearly burst with rage. Whenever a (fresh) host is flung therein the wardens thereof ask them, Came there to you no warner?* [67:9] *They say, Yes, verily a warner came to us; but we denied and said, God has not sent down anything; you are in nothing but a great error.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *As* Gehenna *would nearly tamayyaz*: He says: Fragment and divide, *with rage* towards its inhabitants. Q. 67:8

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *As it would nearly tamayyaz with rage*, "Fragment".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *As it would nearly tamayyaz with rage*, "Some of it nearly separated from the rest of it, becoming cracked."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *As it would nearly tamayyaz with rage*, "Fragment".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning *As it would nearly tamayyaz with rage*, "*Tamayyaz* means 'to fragment' *with rage* towards the people who disobey God out of God's anger and vengeance towards them."

INTERPRETATION OF *Whenever a (fresh) host is flung therein the wardens thereof ask them, Came there to you no warner? They say, Yes, verily a warner came to us; but we denied and said, God has not revealed anything; you are in nothing but a great error.*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: *Whenever a* group *is flung* into Gehenna, *the wardens thereof ask them, Came there to you no warner?* He says: The war-

dens of Gehenna ask *the host*, saying to them, "*Came there to you* in the temporal world *no warner* to warn you of this punishment, in which you now find yourselves?" The ones who have been brought low reply to them, "*Yes, verily a warner came to us* to warn us of this, *but we denied* him, saying, '*God has not revealed anything; you are in nothing but a great error.*'" He says: You are going very far from the truth.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:10] *And they say, Had we been wont to listen or think reasonably, we would not have been among the flame-dwellers.* [67:11] *So they acknowledge their sins; but far removed are the flame-dwellers.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *The host*, which was flung into Hellfire, says to the wardens, "*Had we*, in the temporal world, *been wont to listen or think reasonably* about the advice that the warners brought us and thought reasonably about what they were summoning us to do, *we would not*, today, *have been among the flame-dwellers*," meaning people of Hellfire.

Q. 67:10–11

INTERPRETATION OF *So they acknowledge their sins; but far removed are the flame-dwellers*

He says: They acknowledge their sins. The word "sins" is in the singular in this context, but it is annexed to the plural [object pronoun, their/*him*], because it carries the meaning of a verb, and the singular [verb] can be employed with a plural [subject]. One can say either *kharaja ʿatā'u'l-nās* or [*kharajat*] *aʿtiyatu'l-nās*, [both of which mean: "The people's gifts were disbursed"].[1]

[Concerning His statement] *but suḥqan are the flame-dwellers*: He says: How far [God is] from the people of Hellfire.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—[ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *But suḥqan are the flame-dwellers*, "How far".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Salama b. Kuhayl—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *but suḥqan are the flame-dwellers*, "*Suḥq* is a valley in Gehenna."

1 A similar yet slightly expanded discussion of *dhanb* is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:171. The problem Ṭabarī is addressing is that the literal meaning of the Qur'ānic statement *dhanbihim* is "their sin", while the clearly intended meaning is "their sins".

The Qur'ān reciters are in agreement that the *hā'* in *suḥq* should have a *sukūn* on it, and this is correct in our estimation, because that is eloquent in the speech of the Arabs. However, there are some Arabs who put a *ḍamma* on it.[1]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:12] *Lo! those who fear their Lord in secret, theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward.* [67:13] *And keep your opinion secret or proclaim it, lo! He is Knower of all that is in the breasts.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo! those who* are afraid of *their Lord in secret*. He says: While they do not see Him—*theirs will be forgiveness*. He says: *Theirs will be* pardon of their sins by God *and a great reward*. He says: And a tremendous reward for them from God on account of their secret fear of Him.

Q. 67:12–13

INTERPRETATION OF *And keep your opinion secret or proclaim it, lo! He is Knower of all that is in the breasts*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: O humanity, conceal your opinion and speech or announce it and make it known, *lo! He is Knower of all that is in the breast*. He says: Truly He possesses knowledge of the secret thoughts *in the breast*, which are not articulated, so how [could He not know] that which is enunciated or said out loud, secretly or publicly? This is because it is more fitting for someone, from whom a person's secret thoughts are not concealed, [to have access] to [this person's] other thoughts.[2]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:14] *Should He not know what He created? He is the Kind, the Aware.* [67:15] *He it is Who has made the earth subservient to you, so walk on the edges thereof and eat of His providence. And to Him will be the Resurrection (of the dead).*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Should not* the Lord (Majestic is His praise) *know* the creation *He created*? He says: How can His creation be concealed from Him, when *He is the Kind* with His servants, *the Aware* of them and their deeds?

1 This is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:171.

2 Or, in a less literal translation, "It is more fitting for someone who knows your secret thoughts to know your non-secret thoughts and statements as well."

INTERPRETATION OF *He it is Who has made the earth subservient to you, so walk on the edges thereof*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: God *it is Who has made the earth dhalūlan*—smooth or level, He smoothed it for you—*so walk in its manākib*.

The scholars disagreed over the meaning of *[the earth's] manākib*:

OPINION: Some of them said: Its *manākib* are its mountains.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *in its manākib*, "Its mountains".

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "Bushayr b. Kaʿb[1] recited this verse, *so walk in its manākib*, and said to his slave girl, 'If you know what are *its manākib*, then you are a free woman, by the Face of God!' She replied, 'Its *manākib* are its mountains,' and, suddenly, it was as if a hot wind had blasted his face, overcoming him with [sexual] desire for his slave girl. He asked [several men if he could have her], and some of them allowed him, while others prohibited him. He asked Abū'l-Dardā', who replied, 'The good is in tranquility and certainty, while the bad is in doubt—so leave that which causes doubt for that which does not cause you any doubt.'"[2]

Q. 67:15

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—Muʿādh b. Hishām—his father—Qatāda—Bushayr b. Kaʿb.

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *so walk in its manākib*, "Its mountains".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *in its manākib*, "Its mountains".

OPINION: Others said: Its *manākib* are its edges (*aṭrāf*) and sides (*nawāḥī*).

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *so walk in its manākib*, "Walk on its edges."

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "Bushayr b. Kaʿb al-ʿAdawī recited this verse, *so*

1 Bushayr b. Kaʿb al-ʿAdawī was a Basran Successor whose narrations are found in all of the canonical collections, save that of Muslim; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:442–3. He was among the Muslim soldiers at the decisive battle of Yarmouk in 636.

2 The sentence "Leave that which causes doubt for that which does not cause you any doubt" is a famous *ḥadīth*; it is the eleventh *ḥadīth* in *An-Nawawī's Forty Hadith*, 52–3.

walk in its manākib, and said to his slave girl, 'If you inform me of the meaning of *manākib*, you are free.' She replied, 'Its sides'. He [suddenly] desired to marry her and asked Abū'l-Dardā' [if this were permissible.] Abū'l-Dardā' said, 'The good is in tranquility and certainty, while the bad is in doubt—so leave that which causes doubt for that which does not cause you any doubt.'"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *so walk in its manākib*, "Its paths and ravines".

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion that is most likely correct, in my estimation, is to say: The meaning of that is: "So walk on its sides and edges (*nawāḥīhā*),[1] because the [earth's] sides are equivalent to the shoulders (*manākib*) of a human, which are his edges."

INTERPRETATION OF *and eat of His providence*

Q. 67:16–17

He says: *Eat of the providence* of God, which He has brought forth from the earth's edges.

INTERPRETATION OF *And to Him will be the Resurrection*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Your Resurrection from your graves [will bring you] to God.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:16] Have you taken security from Him Who is in the heaven that He will not cause the earth to swallow you when it is convulsed? [67:17] Or have you taken security from Him Who is in the heaven that He will not let loose on you a squall of pebbles? But you shall know the manner of My warning.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O disbelievers, *have you taken security from Him Who is in the heaven that He will not cause the earth to swallow you when it is convulsed?* He says: When the earth goes back and forth and shakes underneath you. *Or have you taken security from Him Who is in the heaven,* that is God, *that He will not let loose on you a ḥāṣib*, which is soil that is packed with small pebbles. *But you shall know the manner of My warning.* He says: O disbelievers, *you shall know* the outcome of My warning to you, which you denied and rejected from My Messenger.

1 Both Abū ʿUbayda and al-Farrāʾ gloss *manākib* as *jawānib*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:262; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:171.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:18] *And verily those before them denied, then (see) the manner of My wrath!* [67:19] *Have they not seen the birds above them spreading out their wings and closing them? Nothing upholds them save the Beneficent. He is Seer of all things.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And verily* the long-gone generations, who lived prior to these Qurayshī polytheists, *denied* their Messengers, *then (see) the manner of My wrath!* He says: *Then (see) the manner of My wrath* towards their denial of [their Messengers].

INTERPRETATION OF *Have they not seen the birds above them spreading out their wings and closing them?*

He says: *Have* these polytheists *not seen the birds above them, spreading out* their wings *and closing them?* He says: And sometimes they close their wings. What is meant by that is: "Sometimes their wings are spread out, and other times they are closed." Q. 67:18–19

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *ṣāffāt*, "A bird spreads out its wing, as you can see, and then closes it."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *ṣāffāt wa-yaqbidn*, "The spreading-out of their wings and closing of them."

INTERPRETATION OF *Nothing upholds them save the Beneficent*

He says: *Nothing upholds* the birds with spread-out wings above you *except the Beneficent*. He says: In that there is a reminder, for those who reflect, and a lesson, for those who consider, by which they can know that their Lord is One, free from having any partners.

INTERPRETATION OF *He is Seer of all things*

He says: Truly God possesses sight and awareness of all things. There are no gaps in His arrangement [of the universe], nor can any fault be seen in His creation.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:20] *Or who is it that will be an army for you, to help you, instead of the Beneficent? The disbelievers are but deluded.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to the polytheists among the Quraysh: O disbelievers, *who is it that will be an army for you, to help you, instead of the Beneficent* if He wishes you harm? Who can protect you from what He wishes to afflict you?

INTERPRETATION OF *The disbelievers are but deluded.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *The disbelievers* in God *are but deluded* in their belief that their deities will bring them near to God,[1] and that they can benefit or harm [anybody].

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:21] *Or who is it that will provide for you if He should withhold His sustenance? Rather, they are set in pride and aversion.* Q. 67:20–1

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Or who is it who* will feed you, provide drink to you and provide your provisions *should* Your Lord, Who provides you with your sustenance, *withhold His sustenance*?

INTERPRETATION OF *Rather, they are set in pride and aversion*

He says: Rather, they persist in rebellion against God *and aversion* from the truth, and arrogance.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Rather, they are set in ʿutuww and nufūr*, "In error (*ḍalāl*)".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *Rather, they are set in ʿutuww and nufūr*, "Ingratitude (*kufūr*)".

1 Ṭabarī is paraphrasing Q.39:3 here: *And those who choose protecting friends beside Him (say), We worship them only that they may bring us near to God.*

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:22] *Is he who walks with a downcast face more rightly guided, or he who walks upright on a straight road?*

OPINION: God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *is he who walks with a downcast face*, not seeing what is in front of him, or to his right or left, *more rightly guided*? He says: More firmly adhering to the path and more guided by it, *or he who walks upright*, as humans walk, on their two feet, *on a straight road*? He says: On a path that is free of any curves.

It has been alleged that *mukibban* is [the active participle of the Form IV verb *akabba*] because it is intransitive. When this verb is intransitive, they [use Form IV]. They say *akabba fulānun ʿalā wajhihi, fa-huwa mukibbun*.[1] A further example of this is the verse by al-Aʿshā:

mukibban ʿalā rawqayhi yahfiru ʿirqahā
ʿalā ẓahri ʿuryānī'l-ṭarīqati ahyamā

Q. 67:22

[The bull], bearing down on its two horns, digs out the trees' roots [for a shelter]
On the surface of the path of fine-grained Sand

The poet says *mukibban* because the verb *[akabba]* is intransitive. Had the verb been transitive, [Form I of *kabba* would have been used]. One says *kababtu fulānan ʿalā wajhihi* and *kabbahu Allāhu ʿalā wajhihi*.[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Is he who walks with a downcast face more rightly guided, or he who walks upright on a straight road*, "[Is] *he who walks* astray *more rightly guided or he who walks* in a guided manner?"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *mukibban ʿalā wajhih*, "[Meaning] astray".

[1] "So-and-so has a downcast face; he is downcast."

[2] "I put so-and-so's face on the ground" and "God put his face on the ground." A similar discussion, without the poetry, is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:171. Generally, Form IV transforms the first form of an intransitive verb into a transitive verb; see Wright, 1:34–5. What Ṭabarī is showing is that the reverse is the case for the verbal root *k-b-b*. (Wright also mentions the case of *akabba* in a footnote on p. 35.)

Then [regarding] *Or he who walks upright on a straight road*, he said, "[On a] straight truth *(ḥaqq)*".

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Is he who walks with a downcast face*, "Meaning [is] a disbeliever *more rightly guided, or he*, the believer, *who walks upright on a straight road*? God has coined a similitude for both of them."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is that God will gather the disbelievers on Resurrection Day, put their faces on the ground, and say: *Is he who walks with a downcast face* on Resurrection Day *more rightly guided, or he who walks upright* today?

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Is he who walks with a downcast face more rightly guided*, "This is the disbeliever, whose face is downcast in the temporal world on account of his disobedience of God. On Resurrection Day, God will drive him [together with the other disbelievers] on his face. Someone asked, 'O Prophet of God, how does God drive the disbeliever on his face?' He said, 'Truly the One Who lets him walk on two legs has the power to drive him on Resurrection Day on his face.'"[1]

Q. 67:22–3

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Is he who walks with a downcast face more rightly guided*, "This is the disbeliever who acts in disobedience to God. God will drive him [to the gathering] on Resurrection Day on his face." Maʿmar said, "Someone said to the Prophet (ṣ), 'How do they walk on their faces?' He replied, 'Truly the One Who lets them walk on their feet has the power to make them walk on their faces.'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *he who walks upright on a straight* road, "This is the believer, who acts in obedience to God. God will drive him [to the gathering] in accordance with his obedience."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:23] *Say: He it is Who gave you being, and has assigned to you ears and eyes and hearts. Little thanks do you give!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O Muḥammad, *say* to these poly-

[1] Suyūṭī does not appear to mention this *mursal ḥadīth* in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, although he does mention the following report; see Dār Hajar, 23:134.

theists, who deny the Resurrection, "It is God *Who gave you being* and created you, *and has assigned to you ears* by which you hear *and eyes* by which you see *and hearts* by which you think and understand."

INTERPRETATION OF *Little thanks do you give!*

He says: *Little thanks do you give* your Lord for these bounties, which He has bestowed upon you.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:24] *Say: He it is Who multiplies you on the earth, and to Whom you will be gathered.* [67:25] *And they say, When will this promise (be fulfilled), if you are truthful?*

Q. 67:23-7

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *say:* God *it is Who multiplies you on the earth.* He says: God *Who* creates *you on the earth, and to Whom you will be gathered.* He says: You will be gathered in the presence of God, assembled from your graves at the Station of Reckoning, *and they say, When will this promise (be fulfilled), if you are truthful?* God (Majestic is His praise) says: The polytheists will say, "When will all this, which you have promised us, concerning the gathering in the presence of God, take place *if you are truthful* about your promise that you have made us?"

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:26] *Say: The knowledge is with God only, and I am but a plain warner;* [67:27] *But when they see it nigh, the faces of those who disbelieve will be awry, and it will be said (to them), This is that which you used to claim.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *say* to these people who challenge you to hasten [God's] punishment and arrival of the Last Hour, "*The knowledge* of the Last Hour and when the Resurrection will take place *is with God only.* Nobody knows that other than He, *and I am but a plain warner.*" He says, "*I am* only *a warner* to warn you about God's punishment, on account of your disbelief in Him, and God has made clear to you His warning."

INTERPRETATION OF *But when they see it nigh, the faces of those who disbelieve will be awry*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: When these polytheists see God's

punishment *zulfatan.* He says: Up close, face-to-face, *the faces of those who disbelieve will be awry.* He says: God will set awry the disbelievers' faces by [showing them His punishment].

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning the meaning of His statement *zulfatan.* An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *But when they see it zulfatan,* "When they see it with their eyes."

Ibn al-Muthannā—Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr—Shuʿba—Abū Rajāʾ said, "I asked al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] about His statement *But when they see it zulfatan* and he said, 'With their eyes'."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *But when they see it zulfatan,* "It has drawn near."

Q. 67:27

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *But when they see it zulfatan, the faces of those who disbelieve will be awry,* "When they see God's punishment with their eyes."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *But when they see it zulfatan, the faces of those who disbelieve will be awry,* "*When they see* God's punishment *zulfatan.* He says: Their *faces will be awry* when they see what they see of God's punishment and His abasement."

Yūnus [b. Abd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning *But when they see it zulfatan,* "It is alleged that *zulfa* means 'being present (*ḥāḍir*)'. In other words, God's punishment (Mighty and Majestic is He) is in their [immediate] presence."

INTERPRETATION OF *and it will be said (to them), This is that which you used to claim*

He says: God will say to them: This is the punishment that you used to summon Your Lord to hasten to you.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. Abd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *and it will be said (to them), This is that which you used to claim,* "Their challenge to hasten the punishment."

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the recitation of this clause. Most of the reciters of the garrison cities recited ***hadhā'lladhī kuntum bihi taddaʿūn*** with a *shadda* on the *dāl*, in [Form VIII], meaning "used to claim or proclaim". It has been alleged that Qatāda and al-Ḍaḥḥāk would recite *tadʿūn*, in [Form I], meaning "used to summon".

Aḥmad b. Yūsuf—al-Qāsim—Ḥajjāj—Hārūn—Abān al-ʿAṭṭār and Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba said: Qatāda recited ***alladhī kuntum bihi tadʿūn*** without a *shadda* [on the *dāl*] and said, "They used to summon the punishment in the temporal world." Then [Qatāda] recited, *And when they said, O God, if this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down stones on us or bring on us some painful punishment!* (Q.8:32).

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct recitation is the one upon which the reciters of the garrison cities agree, on account of the consensus of the evidence of the reciters upon it.

Q. 67:28-9

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:28] *Say: Have you considered whether God causes me and those with me to perish or has mercy on us; still, who will protect the disbelievers from a painful doom?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *say* to the polytheists among your people, "O people, *have you considered whether God causes me and those with me to perish*, and so makes me die, *or has mercy on us*, postponing our lifespans? *Who will protect the disbelievers* in God *from a* painful and agonizing *doom*?" This is the punishment of Hellfire. He says, "Neither our death nor our life will deliver the disbelievers from God's punishment, so there is no need or benefit for you [to ask me] to hasten the arrival of the Last Hour and the descent of the [final] punishment; rather, this will be a supreme trial for you."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:29] *Say: He is the Beneficent. In Him we believe and in Him we put our trust. And you will soon know who it is that is in error manifest.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *say*, "Our Lord *is the Beneficent. In Him we believe.*" He says, "We have faith in Him, *and in Him we put our trust*." He says, "And we rely upon and trust in Him in all of our affairs."

INTERPRETATION OF *And you will soon know who it is that is in error manifest*

He says: O you who associate partners with God, *you will soon know* who from among us has veered away from the truth and is not on a straight path, when we come to God and are gathered all together [at the Last Hour].

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[67:30] *Say: Have you considered: If (all) your water was to disappear into the earth, who then could bring you gushing water?*

Q. 67:30

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *say* to these polytheists, "O people who have strayed from God, *Have you considered: If (all) your water was to disappear into the earth*." He says: Inaccessible, unreachable by buckets, *who then could bring you gushing water?* He says: Who could bring you *maʿīn* water, meaning that which the springs bring forth at the surface.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʾAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Who then could bring you maʿīn water*, "Delicious water".

ʿAbd al-Aʿlā b. Wāṣil—ʿUbayd b. Hāshim al-Bazzāz—Sharīk—Sālim—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning His statement *If (all) your water was to [become] ghawran*, "The buckets cannot reach it. *Who then could bring you maʿīn water*: surface [water]."

Bishr [b. Muʾādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *If (all) your water was to [become] ghawran*, "Gone, *who then could bring you maʿīn water?*" He said, "*Maʿīn* water is flowing [water]."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *your water was to [become] ghawran*, "Gone, *so who then could bring you maʿīn water*: flowing [water]."

The water is described as *ghawr*, which is a verbal noun, just as one says *layla ghamm* ("a dark, sultry night") in place of *layla ghāmma*.[1]

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Mulk

[1] This explanation is found in al-Akhfash; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:712.

THE RESURRECTION
SŪRAT AL-QIYĀMA
(Q. 75:1–40)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[75:1] *Nay, I swear by Resurrection Day;* [75:2] *Nay, I swear by the self-reproaching soul.* [75:3] *Does man think that We shall not assemble his bones?* [75:4] *Yes, verily yes. We are able to level off his very fingers!*

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of His statement *Nay, I swear by Resurrection Day*. Most of the reciters of the garrison cities read *lā uqsimu*, in which the particle *lā* is separated from the verb *uqsimu*, except for al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] and al-Aʿraj. It has been alleged that these two men recited *la'uqsimu bi-yawm al-qiyāma*, with the meaning, "I swear by Resurrection Day," and then the "*lām* of the oath" was added to it.[1]

The only permissible reading of this verse is with a *lā* that is separated from the verb *uqsimu*, as the initial word, in accordance with the recitation of the Qur'ān reciters of the garrison cities. Their consensus constitutes a decisive proof.[2]

Those who recited this the way we have chosen to read it disagreed over its interpretation.[3]

OPINION: Some of them said: *Lā* is a coordinating particle (*ṣila*) and that the meaning of the statement is *I swear by Resurrection Day*.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Jurayj—al-Ḥasan b. Muslim b. Yannāq—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *lā uqsimu bi Resurrection Day*, "*I swear* (*uqsimu*) *by Resurrection Day*."

1 For more on the "*lām* of the oath", see Wright, 1:282–3.

2 Al-Farrāʾ says that al-Ḥasan's reading of *la'uqsimu* is permissible on philological grounds: *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:207.

3 The basic problem Ṭabarī addresses here is that *lā* generally serves as a negative particle, and so, read literally, the verse says: "I do not swear by Resurrection Day."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Jurayj—al-Ḥasan b. Muslim—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *lā uqsimu*, "I swear".

OPINION: Others among them said: Rather, the particle *lā* adds emphasis to the statement.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Abū Bakr b. ʿAyyāsh said, "His statement *lā uqsimu* is an emphatic oath, just like His statement *lā wa'llāh* ('By God!')."

OPINION: One of the Kufan grammarians[1] said: *Lā* ("Nay!") refutes the statement that had previously been made by the polytheists who had been denying [the existence of] the Garden and Hellfire. [He says "Nay",] and then the oath begins: *I swear by Resurrection Day*. He would say: Every oath uttered prior to this one is rejected by this statement, so it is imperative for the oath to be prefaced with the particle *lā*, in order to distinguish between an oath that negates [an earlier one] and a free-standing oath. He says: Do you not see that if you just say "By God! Verily the Messenger is in the right" [it is different from you saying] "Nay! By God! Verily the Messenger is in the right," since, [in the later case], it is as if you are refuting the people who denied him?

Q. 75:1

They also disagreed over whether this is an oath.

OPINION: Some of them said: It is an oath in which Our Lord swears by *Resurrection Day* and by *the self-reproaching soul*.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Abū'l-Khayr b. Tamīm—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "Ibn ʿAbbās said to me, 'From whom do you come?' I replied, 'From the people of Iraq.' He said, 'Which ones?' I said, 'From Banū Asad.' He said, 'From the destitute (*ḥarīb*)[2] among them, or those whom God has blessed?' I said, 'No, rather those whom God has blessed.' He said to me, 'Ask [me your question].' I said, '[What does] *lā uqsimu bi-yawmi'l-qiyāma* [mean]?' He said, 'Your Lord swears by whatever part of His creation He wishes.'"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Nay, I swear by Resurrection Day*;

1 This is the opinion of al-Farrāʾ, who explains this passage somewhat differently to Ṭabarī; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:207.

2 The editors of the al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* suggest that the meaning of *ḥarīb* is: "one who is destitute"; *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 29:173. The editors of the Dār Hajar edition, following the narration in al-Ḥākim's *Mustadrak*, read *ḥarūriyyatihim*, which would mean "From the Khārijīs among them"; 23:467. None of the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* that they consulted has this wording.

nay, I swear by the self-reproaching soul, "I swear by both of them together."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, He swore by Resurrection Day, but He did not swear by the self-reproaching soul. He said: The meaning of His statement *wa-lā uqsimu bi'l-nafsi'l-lawwāma* is: "But I do not swear by the self-reproaching soul."

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said: al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "He swore by Resurrection Day, but he did not swear by the self-reproaching soul."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: Truly God swears by *Resurrection Day* and by *the self-reproaching soul*. One makes the initial *lā* a refutation of and reply to the earlier statements of a group of people. We hold this to be the opinion that is most likely to be correct because it is in accordance with people's well-known usage in their dialogues. When one of them says, "*lā*, by God! I didn't do that!", the intention of the particle *lā* is to refute an earlier statement, while "by God" is the beginning of the oath. This holds true for their expression, "*lā uqsimu bi'llāh*, I didn't do that!" If the well-known usage is as we have described, then it is necessary for everything that is equivalent to it to be understood in the same way, as long as there is not anything else present that must be followed, which would alter it from its common usage. To conclude: Truly the sum of all of the agreed-upon evidence is that His statement, *lā uqsimu by Resurrection Day*, is an oath, as is His statement *lā uqsimu by the self-reproaching soul*, unless there is any evidence indicating that one clause is an oath and the other one is a declarative sentence. We have already indicated that the recitation of the person who read the intial word as *laʾuqsimu*, connecting the *lām* to *uqsima*, is an impermissible recitation, because it contradicts the reading upon which there is consensus. Therefore, the interpretation of this speech is: "*Nay*, O humanity, the matter—that God will not resurrect His servants after their deaths—is not as you say it is. *I swear by Resurrection Day*."

Q. 75:1

A group would say: The *qiyāma* of each soul is its death [as opposed to its resurrection].

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] and Misʿar—Ziyād b. ʿIlāqa—al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba said, "People say, '*al-qiyāma, al-qiyāma*!' The *qiyāma* of any one of them is his death."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] and Misʿar—Abū Qays[1] said, "I witnessed a funeral prayer at which ʿAlqama [b. Qays] was present. When the body was buried, he said, 'As for this one, his *qiyāma* has arrived.'"

INTERPRETATION OF *Nay, I swear by the self-reproaching soul*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *al-lawwāma*.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: I swear by the soul that reproaches for the good and the bad.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Bashshār—Muʾammal—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Jurayj—al-Ḥasan b. Muslim—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *Nay, I swear by the lawwāma soul*, "It reproaches for the good and the bad."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Isrāʾīl—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning *Nay, I swear by the self-reproaching soul*, "It reproaches for the good and the bad."

Q. 75:2

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Abūʾl-Khayr b. Tamīm—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "I asked Ibn ʿAbbās about *Nay, I swear by the lawwāma soul* and he said, 'It is the reproaching [soul].'"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that [this soul] reproaches for opportunities missed and regretted.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *the lawwāma soul*, "It regrets missed opportunities and reproaches it for them."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, *lawwāma* means: "profligate (*fājira*)".

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Nay, I swear by the lawwāma soul*, "In other words, the profligate [soul]".

OPINION: Others said: Rather, it is the abased (*madhmūma*) [soul].

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—

[1] Following the reading of the Dār Hajar edition of Qays instead of the Ḥalabī reading of Qubays; 23:469.

Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Nay, I swear by the lawwāma soul*, "Abased".

TABARĪ SAID: All of these opinions that we have mentioned, from the authorities we have mentioned, are close in meaning, even though the words of their advocates differ. The interpretation that most closely resembles the apparent meaning of the revelation is that the soul reproaches its owner for the good and the bad, and regrets missed opportunities.

All of the Qur'ān reciters are in total agreement that the particle *lā* is separated from the word *uqsimu* in this verse.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *Does man think that We shall not assemble his bones? Yes, verily yes. We are able to level off his very fingers!*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Does the son of Adam suppose that we will not be able to assemble his bones after they are disassembled? *Yes, verily Yes. We are able to* do something greater than that: [We can] *level off his very banān*, which are his fingers and toes, and make them into a single unit, like the foot of a camel or the hoof of a donkey. [We could have made man's hands and feet] in such a way that he could only eat by picking up food with his mouth, like the rest of the beasts, but instead we divided his hands into fingers, so he could use them to pick up food. Thus he can reach out and grab ahold of it when he wishes to or release it. God has made His creation beautiful.

Q. 75:3-4

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Abū'l-Khayr b. Tamīm—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "Ibn ʿAbbās said to me, 'Ask [me about anything].' I said, '[Explain] *Does man think that We shall not assemble his bones? Yes, verily yes. We are able to level off his very fingers!*' He said, 'Had He willed, He could have made man with a camel's foot or a hoof.'"

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Yes, verily yes. We are able to level off his very fingers*, "[God says:] I am capable of making his hand a single stub, like the camel's foot."

Abū Kurayb—Ibn ʿAṭiyya—Isrāʾīl—Mughīra—Anonymous—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *We are able to level off his very fingers*, "[We could] have made [his hand] like a camel's foot or a hoof."

1 This is in contradistinction to the case of the previous verse; see above Q 75:1.

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—al-Naḍr—ʿIkrima said, concerning *to level off his very fingers*, "We could have made them like a camel's foot or a donkey's hoof."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Yes, verily yes. We are able to level off his very fingers*, "[God] made a hand [for man], and he can clench [his fingers] or spread them open. Had He wished, He could have made it a single stump, forcing you to forage for food on the ground with your mouth. Instead, God made you a beautiful, balanced body." Abū Rajāʾ said, "'Ikrima was asked [about this]. He said, 'Had God willed, He would have made your hand like a camel's foot.'"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *to level off his very banān*, "His feet, like a camel's foot, which he could not use for anything."

Q. 75:3-4

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Yes, verily yes. We are able to level off his very fingers*, "By God! Our Lord is able to make his fingers like the hoof of a beast, or a camel's foot. Had He willed, He could have done that, leaving man to forage for food on the ground with his mouth."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *to level off his very fingers*, "Had [God] willed, He could have made his fingers like a camel's foot or a beast's hoof."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *to level off his very banān*, "The *banān* are fingers. [God] says: We are able to make his fingers like a camel's foot."

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over why *qādirīn* is in the accusative case [in this verse].

OPINION: Some of them said: It is in the accusative case due to its function in the sentence as a verb. When the active participle is used [in this way], it is put in the accusative case. The meaning of these sentences is: "*Does man think that We shall not assemble his bones? Yes, verily yes.* We are able (*naqdiru*) to join them together." The [implied verb] *naqdir* is changed into [the active participle] *qādirīn*.

OPINION: One of the Kufan grammarians[1] said: It is put in the accusative case on account of the governance of the verb *We shall assemble* (*najma*ʿ). It is as if the sentences read, "Does he think that We will not have strength over him? Yes, verily yes—*qādirīn* over those stronger than you!" What He intends [by *qādirīn*] is: Yes, verily, yes—*naqwā muqtadirīn* over more than that." He said: The opinion that *balā naqdir* ("But yes, we can") is put in the accusative case as *qādirīn* [when the active participle is used] is incorrect because a [nominative] verb cannot be put in the accusative case [just] on account of its being changed into a nominal form. Do you not you see that if you say *a-taqūmu ilaynā*? ("Will you be staying with us?") and then change the verb into a nominal form, you would say *a-qā'imun*? Were you to say *a-qā'iman* (in the accusative case), that would be grammatically incorrect.

Q. 75:3-4

[Al-Farrā'] said: [The advocates of the first opinion] cite the the following verse of al-Farazdaq in support [of their claim that *qādirīn* is in the accusative case because it is the nominal form of the verb *naqdiru*]:

> ʿalayya qasamun lā ashtumu'l-dahra muslimān
> wa-lā khārijan min fiyya zūru kalāmī
>
> Upon me is an oath— I shall not revile a single Muslim ever again
> Nor will obscene speech come out of my mouth.

[The proponents of the first opinion] claim that the poet means: "I shall not revile" and "[obscene speech] will not come out (*lā yakhruju*)." When he transfers the verb [*yakhruju*] into the active participle *khārij*, he puts [the active participle] in the accusative case. [Al-Farrā' said:] The only reason *khārij* is in the accusative case in this verse is because the poet means: "I have made a pact with My Lord not to revile anyone and for no obscene speech to come out of my mouth." The expression *lā ashtumu* is, syntactically, in the accusative case [because the implied meaning is, *ʿāhadtu rabbi lā shātiman ahadan*].

One of the Basran grammarians[2] said: The word [*qādirīn*] is put the accusative case on account of the verb *najma*ʿ [in the preceding verse]. In other words, "Rather, we join [the bones] together, while *being able to level off his very fingers* (*bal najmaʿuhā qādirīn ʿalā an nusawwiya banānahu*)."

ṬABARĪ SAID: This second opinion is closer to being correct, according to the way of the experts in the Arabic language.

1 This is al-Farrā'; see his *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:208.
2 This is the opinion of al-Akhfash; see his *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:720.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[75:5] *But man desires to deny what is before him.* [75:6] *He asks, When will be this Resurrection Day?* [75:7] *But when sight is confounded* [75:8] *And the moon is eclipsed* [75:9] *And sun and moon are united,* [75:10] *On that day man will cry, Where to flee?* [75:11] *Alas! No refuge!* [75:12] *Unto your Lord is the recourse that day.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The son of Adam is not ignorant of the fact that His Lord is able to assemble his bones; rather, he wishes to persist straight ahead in disobeying God. Nothing is capable of deterring him from doing this, nor will he ever repent from [these wicked deeds], and he [continuously] postpones repentance.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Q. 75:5

Ibn Humayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Abū'l-Khayr b. Tamīm al-Ḍabbī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*, "He persists straight ahead [in acts of disobedience]."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*, "This refers to his hope. A human says, 'I am doing this, then I shall repent prior to Resurrection Day.' It is said, 'This is the rejection of the truth before the Resurrection.'"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *to deny what is amāmahu*, "He proceeds in a heedless manner."[1]

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*: al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "You will not meet any son of Adam save that his soul (*nafs*) desires to disobey God persistently, except he whom God protects."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *to deny what is amāmahu*, "Persisting in acts of disobedience".

1 Literally, "riding on his head (*rākiban raʾsahu*)"; Dār Hajar, 23:475. For this definition of the expression of *rakiba raʾsahu*, see Lane, "*r-k-b*".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Salama—ʿAmr—Ismāʿīl al-Suddī said, concerning *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*, "Persistently".

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—al-Naḍr—ʿIkrima said, concerning *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*, "Persistently. He is incapable of extracting himself from his wicked actions."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ [b. al-Jarrāḥ]—his father—Abū Isḥāq—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *to deny what is amāmahu*, "[He says:] I will repent in the future."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that [man] proceeds heedlessly in pursuit of the temporal world, without remembering death.

An account of those who said that:

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*, "This is hope. Humans hope, [saying] 'I am living and I shall take from the world this and that,' without remembering death."

Q. 75:6

OPINION: Others said: More exactly, the meaning of that is: Rather, the disbelieving *man desires* to deny (*li-yukadhdhiba*) Resurrection Day.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*, "The disbeliever denies the Reckoning."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *But man desires to deny what is amāmahu*, "He will deny what lies ahead of him on Resurrection Day and the Reckoning."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: ***But man desires*** to reject the truth before the Resurrection. The pronoun ***hāʾ*** **in His statement** *amāmahu* refers to Resurrection [Day] and the Reckoning.

We have already mentioned the narrations to this effect [in this section].

INTERPRETATION OF *He asks, When will be this Resurrection Day?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "The son of Adam, who persists straight ahead in his disobedience of God (Mighty and Majestic is He), says, 'When will be Resurrection Day?' He asks this in order to postpone his repentance." God explained [the answer to this question] by saying ***But when sight is confounded, and the moon is eclipsed, and sun and moon are united*** and the remainder of the verses.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ibn ʿAṭiyya—Isrāʾīl—Abū Isḥāq—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *When will be this Resurrection Day*, "He says, 'I will repent.' [God] explained this to him: ***But when sight is confounded, and the moon is eclipsed.***"[1]

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *He asks ayyān this Resurrection Day*, "When will be *this Resurrection Day*? ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r) said, 'Let whoever asks about Resurrection Day recite this *sūra*.'"

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *He asks ayyān this Resurrection Day*, "When will that be?" Then he recited *and sun and moon are united* (Q.75:9) and said, "That is when Resurrection Day will be."

Q. 75:7

INTERPRETATION OF *But when sight is confounded*

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the reading of this verse.

OPINION: Abū Jaʿfar al-Qāriʾ, Nāfiʿ and Ibn Abī Isḥāq read *fa-idhā baraqa'l-baṣar* with a *fatha* on the *rāʾ* [of *baraqa*], with the meaning of "Staring and opened at the time of death."

OPINION: Shayba, Abū ʿAmr and most of the Kufan reciters read *bariqa*, with a *kasra* under the *rāʾ*, with the meaning of "being afraid" and "looking fixedly".[2]

Aḥmad b. Yūsuf—al-Qāsim—Ḥajjāj—Hārūn[3] said, "I asked Abū ʿAmr b. al-Alāʾ[4] about it. He said, '*Bariqa* with a *kasra* means: "to be confounded (*ḥāra*)".' Then I asked ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Isḥāq[5] and he said, '*Baraqa*

1 See the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* (23:477–8). Most manuscripts and print editions combine the *isnāds* of this report and the following one, and do not include the text of this report.

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya has a different account of the semantic differences between *baraqa* and *bariqa* and the readings of the Qurʾān reciters, although he acknowledges that the words are close in meaning; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:403. Al-Farrāʾ identifies al-Aʿmash, ʿĀṣim, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and some Medinans as reading *bariqa*, which Nāfiʿ read as *baraqa*; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:209.

3 This is the Basran Qurʾān reciter, grammarian and *Ḥadīth* narrator Hārūn b. Mūsā al-Azdī al-Aʿwar; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 6:615–16. Unfortunately, his death date has not been preserved, although he was active during the second/eighth century.

4 This is the famous canonical Qurʾān reciter and grammarian who settled in Basra, where he died c. 154–7/770–3; see R. Blachère, "Abū ʿAmr Zabbān b. al-ʿAlāʾ", *EI²*.

5 This is another well-known Basran Qurʾān reciter and grammarian, who died in 129/746–7; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 3:413.

with a *fatha*. Only[1] the dried-out colocynth can *bariqa*. How can the eyes *bariqa*?' Then I mentioned this to Abū ʿAmr, who said, 'The colocynth, fire and lighting all *yabruqu*. As for the eyes, they *bariqa* at the time of death. [Hārūn] said: I informed Ibn Abī Isḥāq of this, who said, 'I took my reading from the senior masters (*ashyākh*): Naṣr b. ʿĀṣim[2] and his companions.' Then I mentioned this to Abū ʿAmr, who said, 'I do not take any [Qur'ānic] readings from Naṣr or his companions.' It was as if he meant by this, 'I only take [Qur'ān recitation] from the people of the Hijaz.'"

ṬABARĪ SAID: The reading that is most likely correct, in my estimation, is *fa-idhā bariqa*, with a *kasra* under the *rā'*, with the meaning of "being afraid, looking fixedly, open-eyed at the terror of Resurrection Day, fearing death." This is what has come down to me from the Arab poets. Some of the transmitters from Abū ʿUbayda[3] recited this verse by Kulābī to me:[4]

Q. 75:7

lammā atānī 'bnu Subayhin rāghiban
a'taytuhu 'aysā'a minhā fa-bariq

When a man of Subayḥ came to me, asking humbly [for help],
I gave him a reddish-white camel, and his [eyes] opened fixedly.

ṬABARĪ SAID: I was informed on the authority of Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrā', who said, "Some Arabs recited to me":[5]

na'āni Hanānatu tūbālatan
tasaffu yabisan min al-'ishriqi

fa-nafsaka fa'n'a wa-lā tan'ani
wa-dāwi 'l-kulūma wa-lā tabraqi

Hanāna announced to me the death, that is, of an ewe
That eats dry ʿishriq bushes;[6]

Announce this death to yourself, not to me;
Treat your wounds, and be not afraid!

1 The Dār Hajar edition fills a major lacuna in this passage in earlier editions of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*; see 23:479.
2 Naṣr b. ʿĀṣim was an early Basran Qur'ān reciter and *Hadith* narrator who, despite his alleged Khārijī leanings, was considered reliable by *Hadith*-transmitter critics like Nasā'ī and Ibn Ḥibbān; see *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 6:536.
3 This is one of the relatively rare passages in which Tabarī acknowledges his debt to Abū ʿUbayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and al-Farrā''s *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān*.
4 This verse is in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:277.
5 These verses are found in al-Farrā', *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān*, 3:209.
6 This verse is translated in Lane's *Lexicon* under the entry for *tūbāla*. Both verses come from a poem by the famous pre-Islamic poet Tarafa.

The final word is *tabraqī*, with a *fatha* on the *rā'*. [Al-Farrā'] explained it as meaning: Do not be afraid from your dreadful wounds. He said: Likewise, eyes will be fixated on Resurrection Day.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *But when sight is confounded*, "The meaning of *bariqa'l-baṣar* is 'death'. The flashing of the eyes is the Last Hour."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *But when sight is confounded*, "At death".

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *But when sight bariqa*, "The eyes are fixated (*shakhaṣa'l-baṣar*)." Q. 75:8–

INTERPRETATION OF *and the moon is eclipsed*

He says: When the luminence of the moon departs.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *khasafa the moon*, "The moon's luminence departs, such that it no longer has any luminence."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *khasafa the moon*, "It is its luminence. Its luminence departs."

INTERPRETATION OF *And sun and moon are united*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "The sun and moon are united in having their [respective] luminosity depart; neither one has any luminosity [at this time]."[1]

It has been alleged that the [unorthodox] reading of ʿAbd Allāh [b. Mas'ūd] is *wa-jumi'a* bayna*'l-shams wa'l-qamar*.[2] It also has been alleged

1 Much of the content of this paragraph and the following one are found in al-Farrā', *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān*, 3:209.
2 This reading has essentially the same meaning as the orthodox reading.

that [the sun and moon] will be brought together and then folded away, like God (Majestic is His praise) said, *When the sun is folded away* (Q.81:1). It has also been alleged that its meaning is as we mentioned, that *the sun and moon are united* together.

One of the Kufan grammarians[1] said: [The verb] "are united (*jumiʿa*)" is understood as "the two lights are united," as if it were said, "and the two luminosities are united." This is the opinion of Kisāʾī.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And sun and moon are united*, "They are folded under on Resurrection Day."

Q. 75:10

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And sun and moon are united*, "They will be united and hurled into the earth." Then he recited *When the sun is folded away* (Q.81:1) and said, "The sun is folded into the earth, along with the moon."

[Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Saʿīd b. Abī Ayyūb—Abū Shayba al-Kūfī—Zayd b. Aslam said that one day ʿAṭāʾ b. Yasār recited this verse, *And sun and moon are united*, and said, "They will be united on Resurrection Day, then they will be cast into the sea, which will become God's greatest fire."

INTERPRETATION OF *On that day man will cry, Where to flee?*

The word *mafarru* is read with a *fatḥa* on the *fāʾ*, according to the majority of the reciters of the garrison cities, because the middle radical [in the present tense] takes a *kasra*. When the middle radical takes a *kasra* in the present tense [i.e. *yafirru*], the Arabs put a *fatḥa* above its verbal noun (*maṣdar*), if the verb is enunciated *yafʿilu*.[2] Thus, they say *farra, yafirru, mafarran*—which means *firāran* ("to flee"), as the poet says,[3]

yā la-Bakrin anshirū li-Kulaybanyā la-Bakrin ayna ayna'l-firāru

O Bakr, bring Kulayb back to life for me!
O Bakr, where, O where, to flee [from death]?

1 This is al-Farrāʾ.
2 Following the reading of the Dār Ḥajar edition; see 23:483.
3 This verse of poetry is found in al-Akhfash, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:720.

When this is the desired meaning of the nominal form *mafʿal*, they say "Where to flee (*mafarru*)" with a *fatḥa* on the *fāʾ*. The same holds true for *madabbu* ("crawling/flowing") from the verb *dabba/yadibbu*, as one of them said:[1]

kaʾanna baqāyāʾl-athri fawqa-mutūnihimadabbuʾl-dabā fawqaʾl-naqā wa-hwa sārihu

The mark from the finely crafted blade above its broad sides is like
The leisurely crawling of a locust larva on the sand dune

This verse has been recited as *madibbu* with a *kasra* under the *dāl*, but most people recite it with a *fatḥa*, and this is how the Arabs enunciate it. It is a verbal noun with a *kasra* under the middle radical. Al-Farrāʾ claimed that these are two dialects and that he heard "He came to the flowing stream" as both *madabb al-sayl* and *madibb al-sayl*. Likewise, he heard [the Arabs say] the expression "There is no discoloration on his shirt" as both *masḥh* and *masiḥh*.[2]

Q. 75:10

As for the Basrans,[3] they only put a *fatḥa* on the middle radical of the verbal noun in the form of *mafʿal* when the middle radical of the verb in the present tense takes a *kasra*. However, they do allow a *kasra* (i.e. *mafirru*) if the nominal form refers to the place to which one is fleeing. Likewise, a *madrib* is a place where one is beaten, when the *kasra* is put under the *rāʾ*.

It has been narrated that Ibn ʿAbbās recited *mafirru*, with a *kasra* under the *fāʾ*, saying that a *mafirr* is the fleeing of a beast, when it runs away.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The only reading I permit is *mafarru* with a *fatḥa* on the *fāʾ*, because of the consensus of the reciters upon it, which constitutes a proof. It is a well-known expression (*lugha*) of the Arabs, when the intended meaning is "flight (*firār*)". [And here] the intended meaning in this [Qurʾānic verse] is "flight".

The interpretation of this passage is: On the day he sees, with his own eyes, the terrors of Resurrection Day, man says, "Where to flee (*ayna'l-firār*)[4] from the terror of what has descended upon us?" However, there is no flight.

1 This verse and its explanation are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:210.
2 In other words, the shirt is new. I am grateful for Dr Adel Gamal's assistance with the meaning of this sentence.
3 Most of the content of this paragraph is found in al-Akhfash, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:720–1.
4 Following the Dār Ḥajar edition reading of *firār*, instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *mafarr*; 23:484.

INTERPRETATION OF *Alas! No refuge!*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: "There is no place here to flee that will help this person, because there is no way his flight will save him. No fortress, mountain or stronghold can provide him refuge from the command of God which has encircled him." This is the [meaning of] *refuge* (*wazar*).

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "No protected enclosure (*ḥirz*)".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "It means no fortress and no refuge."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Adham[1] b. Ṭarīf—Muṭarrif b. al-Shikhkhīr recited [the *sūra* beginning with] *Nay, I swear by Resurrection Day* and, when he reached *Alas! No wazar*, said, "This is the mountain. When people flee from something, they say, 'Head for the mountain (*ʿalayka bi'l-wazar*)!'" Q. 75:11

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī—Shuʿba—Adham said, "I heard Muṭarrif say, concerning *Alas! No wazar*, "*Alas! No* mountain".

Naṣr b. ʿAlī al-Jahḍamī—my father—Khālid b. Qays—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *Alas! No wazar*, "No mountain".

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "Some of the Arabs would frighten others. There were two men with their flocks, who did not sense anything [threatening], until a horse [descended upon them], at which point one of them said to his companion, 'O so-and-so, head for the *wazar*, the *wazar*! Head for the mountain, the mountain!'"

Abū Ḥafṣ al-Jubayrī[2]—Muʾammal—Abū Mawdūd—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "No mountain".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Muḥammad b. Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Mawdūd—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī].

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—

1 Following the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 23:485.
2 Following the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 23:485.

Waraqāʾ [b. Umar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "[No] refuge and no mountain".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Alas! No wazar*, "No mountain, no protected enclosure, and no escape. Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, 'The Arabs of the Pre-Islamic time would scare their enemies by saying, "Head for the *wazar*," meaning: "Head for the mountain!"'"

Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd al-Naḥḥās al-Muḥāribī—Ibn al-Mubārak—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Shabīb—Abū Qilāba said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "No fortress".

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Aḥmad b. Hishām—Ubayd Allāh—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Shabīb—Abū Qilāba; and from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Shabīb—Abū Qilāba.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—Muslim b. Ṭahmān—Qatada said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "No fortress". Q. 75:12

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Alas! No wazar*, "No mountain."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ [b. al-Jarrāḥ]—his father—a client of al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *No wazar*, "No fortress".

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Shabīb—Abū Qilāba said, concerning *No wazar*, "No fortress".[1]

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Abū Ḥujayr—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "No fortress."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "[Meaning] 'no mountain', in the Himyarite language."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Alas! No wazar*, "No way to become absent or concealed from this event [i.e. Resurrection Day], from which there is no escape."

INTERPRETATION OF *Unto your Lord is the recourse that day*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O man, *unto your Lord that day is* the settling place. It is God Who settles all of His creatures in their abodes.

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of this.

1 This report is missing from most of the later manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; Dār Hajar, 23:487.

hawr—Ma mar—Abd al-Karīm al-Jazarī—Ziyād b. Abī Maryam—Ibn las ūd said, *What he has sent before* among his deeds *and left behind* among ood or evil practices (*sunna*) that are adopted [on account of him] after his eath."

PINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *On that day man told the tale* of the acts of disobedience he has already done (*qaddama*) and ts of obedience he postoned (*akhkhara*).

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my ncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd l-Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *On that day man told the tale of what he has sent before and left behind*, "He is informed of he acts of disobedience he has done and the acts of obedience he post-oned."

PINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: He will be nformed of his first and last deeds. Q. 75:13

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—Mu'ammal—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid aid, concerning *On that day man is told the tale of what he has sent before and eft behind*, "Of his first and last deeds".

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from:

1] Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid;

2] Abū Kurayb—Wakī'—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid;

3] Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid and Ibrāhīm [al-Nakha'ī].

PINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *What he has sent efore*, among his acts of obedience to God, and [*what he*] *left behind*, among he claims of God he failed to observe.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Mu ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *On that day man is told the tale of what he has sent before and left behind*, "*Of what he has sent before*, among his cts of obedience to God, *and left behind*, among the claims of God he ailed to observe."

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma mar—Qatāda said, concerning *of what he has sent before and eft behind*, "*Of what he has sent before*, among his acts of obedience, and left ehind, among the claims of God (Mighty and Majestic is He)."

PINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *What he has sent*

before, among the good and evil things he has done, *and left behind*, among the acts of obedience to God (Mighty and Majestic is He) from which he neglected.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *On that day man is told the tale of what he has sent before and left behind*, "[*What*] *he left behind*, among the acts of obedience to God from which he neglected and never did, and *what he has sent before*, among the good and evil acts he did."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in our estimation, is that this is a declaration from God that *man* will be *told the tale* of all that *he has sent before* in front of him, among the good and evil deeds he has done during his life, *and left behind* after him, among the good and bad practices that have been left behind after him.[1] Likewise, [he will be informed] of the good or evil deeds he has done, and what he left behind, among the deeds that were incumbent upon him and which he neglected, and those he did not do. God (Mighty and Majestic is He) did not specify [this verse] to mean some [of these interpretations] to the exclusion of others, so all of this will be among the tales that man will be told on Resurrection Day.

Q. 75:14

INTERPRETATION OF *Oh, but man is a telling witness against himself*

God (Majestic and Mighty is He) says: *Oh, but* each *man* has keen observers, within himself, watching his actions and testifying *against himself* about them.[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Oh, but man is a baṣīra against himself*, "His hearing, sight, two hands, two feet and all his limbs [testify against him]."

According to this interpretation of *baṣīra* ("telling witness"), which Ibn ʿAbbās mentioned, as the limbs of the son of Adam, [the word *baṣīra*] is in the nominative case on account of His statement *ʿalā-nafsihi*. The word *insān* is in the nominative case by being the referent of the final pronoun of His statement *nafsihi*.

1 Ṭabarī repeats the words *mimmā qaddama wa-ʾakhkhara* here, presumably for emphasis; Dār Hajar, 23:491.

2 A similar sentence can be found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:211.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: "*Oh, but man is a telling witness against himself* by himself, alone." Whoever adopts this interpretation makes *baṣīra* the predicate of *insān*, which puts *insān* in the nominative case.[1]

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Oh, but man is a baṣīra against himself*, "Man is a witness against himself, alone, by himself."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Oh, but man is a baṣīra against himself*, "A witness against [his soul] and of its deeds."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Oh, but man is a baṣīra against himself*, "By God! If you wished, you would see that man sees other people's defects and sins, while being heedless of his own sins. It has been alleged [that] it is written in the Gospels, 'O Son of Adam, you see the mote in the eye of your brother, while you cannot see the tree stump in your own eye.'"[2]

Q. 75:15

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Oh, but man is a baṣīra against himself*, "He is a witness against himself." Then he recited, [*It will be said to him*], *Read your Book. Your soul suffices as reckoner against you this day* (Q.17:14).

Whoever follows this opinion reads His statement *baṣīra*, with its final *tāʾ marbūṭa*,[3] as the predicate of *insān*, just as one can say to a man "You are a *ḥujja* ("proof") against yourself." This is the interpretation of some Basran grammarians.[4] Some of them say: This *tāʾ marbūṭa* has been added to *baṣīra*, even though it is a descriptor of a masculine noun, just as it can be added in the cases of [a male] *rāwiya* ("transmitter") or *ʿallāma* ("master scholar").

INTERPRETATION OF *Although he tenders his excuses*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of that.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: Rather, each human has

1 A similar sentence is found in al-Akhfash, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 2:721.

2 This is a paraphrase of Luke 6:42: *Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye?* (King James Edition).

3 It appears that the term *tāʾ marbūṭa* was not current in Ṭabarī's time, since he refers to this letter as a *hāʾ*. The basic problem that Ṭabarī is addressing here is that *insān* ("man/human") is a masculine word, while *baṣīra* has the feminine ending.

4 This is a reference to Abū ʿUbayda; see his *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:277.

witnesses against himself from within himself, even if he were to make verbal excuses for the sins he has brought forth, acts of disobedience he has committed and falsehoods he has argued.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-'Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, "*Although he tenders ma'ādhīrahu*, meaning excuses. Have you not heard Him say, *Their excuse does not benefit the transgressors* (Q.40:52)? And God said, *On that day they will meet God in total submission* (Q.16:87); and *We did not do anything evil* (Q.16:28). [Have you not heard] their statement *By God! Our Lord, we were not polytheists* (Q.6:23)?"

Ibn Bashshār—Abū Aḥmad—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī 'Ā'isha—Sa'īd b. Jubayr said, concerning His statement *Although he tenders his excuses*, "He testifies against himself, even if he were to make excuses."

Muḥammad b. 'Amr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū 'Āṣim [al-Nabīl]—'Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both 'Īsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *a telling witness against himself although he tenders his excuses*, "Were he to argue on behalf of [his] self, he would be *a telling witness* against it." Q. 75:15

Ya'qūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn 'Ulayya—'Imrān b. Ḥudayr said, "I asked 'Ikrima about His statement *Oh, but man is a baṣīra against himself, although he tenders his excuses*. 'Ikrima was silent. I said to him, 'Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] would say, "O son of Adam, your deeds are truer to you [than your speech]."' 'Ikrima said, 'He has spoken truthfully.'"

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Although he tenders his excuses*, "Their excuses, which they employ on Resurrection Day, and from which they derive no benefit. He said: A people[1] who make excuses, although they lack permission to do so, and another people, who have permission and make excuses, which do not benefit them. The excuses they make are but lies."

OPINION: Others said: More exactly, the meaning of that is: Rather, each human has a telling witness against himself from within himself, even if he were totally isolated.

An account of those who said that:

Naṣr b. 'Alī al-Jahḍamī—my father—Khālid b. Qays—Qatāda—

1 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *qawm* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *yawm*; 23:494.

Zurāra b. Awfā—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *Although he tenders his excuses*, "Even if he were isolated."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Even though he drops the screens and locks the doors.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-'Asqalānī—Rawwād—Abū Ḥamza—Suddī said, concerning His statement *Although he tenders his excuses*, "Although he drops the screens and locks the doors."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *Although he tenders his excuses*, they would not be accepted.

An account of those who said that:

Naṣr b. 'Alī—my father—Khālid b. Qays—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Although he tenders his excuses*, "His excuses would not be accepted."

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray'][1]—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Although he alqā his excuses*,[1] "Were he to make a false excuse that day, it would not be accepted from him on Resurrection Day." Q. 75:15

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—Qatāda, concerning *Although he alqā his excuses*, "Were he to make excuses."

TABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is to say: Its meaning is: "Were he to make excuses" because this is the closest meaning to the apparent meaning of the revelation. That is because God (Majestic is His praise) has informed humans that their soul is a witness against them by His statement, *Oh, but man is a telling witness against himself*. The best meaning following this verse is: Although he argues on his behalf by means of falsehoods and makes baseless excuses, the testimony of his own soul against him has a greater claim and is better than his making excuses with falsehoods.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[75:16] *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*. [75:17] *Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the recitation thereof.* [75:18] *And when We recite it, follow its recitation;* [75:19] *Then lo! upon Us (rests) the explanation thereof.*

1 Most of the remainder of this report and the entire following report are absent from earlier Print editions of Tabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 23:496.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *Stir not your tongue* with the Qur'ān *to hasten it.*

The interpreters disagreed over the occasion that caused *Stir not your tongue to hasten it* to be said to him.

OPINION: Some of them said: This was said to him because whenever any portion of the Qur'ān came down to him, he would recite it in a hasty manner, out of desire to memorize it and due to his love of it. So it was said to him, "Do not hasten it, for truly We will preserve it upon [your heart]."

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Sufyān b. ʿUyayna—ʿAmr b. Dīnār—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Whenever anything from the Qur'ān came down to the Prophet (ṣ), he would read it hastily, seeking to memorize it. Then God (Exalted is His remembrance) said, *Stir not your tongue to hasten it. Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the recitation thereof.*" Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Like this" and rapidly moved his two lips.[1]

Q. 75:16

ʿUbayd b. Ismāʿīl al-Habbārī and Yūnus—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—ʿAmr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said: Whenever anything from the Qur'ān came down to the Prophet (ṣ), he would read it hastily, seeking to memorize it. Yūnus said: He would move his two lips in order to memorize it. Then God sent down: *Stir not your tongue to hasten it. Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the recitation thereof.*

ʿUbayd b. Ismāʿīl al-Habbārī—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—Ibn Abī ʿĀ'isha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās narrated a nearly identical report to the previous one. After reciting *Stir not your tongue*, he said, "Like this", and Sufyān rapidly moved his mouth.

Sufyān b. Wakīʿ—Jarīr—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "Whenever Gabriel would send down a revelation to the Prophet (ṣ), he [the latter] would move his tongue and lips [rapidly], which would be visibly painful for him. Then God sent down this verse in [the *sūra* beginning with] *Nay, I swear by Resurrection Day: Stir not your tongue to hasten it. Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the recitation thereof.*"

1 According to Suyūṭī, variations of this *hadith* are found in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Bukhārī and Muslim; the *Sunans* of Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī; the *Musnads* of Tayālisī and Ibn Ḥanbal; the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh; and books by Ibn al-Anbārī, Ṭabarānī, Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:467. Suyūṭī's narration of this *hadith* contains Ibn ʿAbbās' commentary on Q.75:16–19, while Ṭabarī breaks up this report, verse by verse.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Whenever the Qur'ān came down to him, the Prophet (ṣ) would move his lips [rapidly], and became known for doing that." (Saʿīd imitated this). Then [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, "[God sent down] *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, which means '*to hasten* taking it [from Gabriel].'"

Muḥammad b. Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha said, "I heard Saʿīd b. Jubayr say, concerning *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, 'When Gabriel (upon him peace) would come down with the Qur'ān, [Muḥammad] would move his tongue quickly and read it hastily. Then [God] said, *Stir not your tongue to hasten it.*'"

Ibn al-Muthannā—Ribʿī b. ʿUlayya—Dāwūd b. Abī Hind—Shaʿbī said, concerning the verse *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "Whenever revelation came down to him, [Muḥammad] would speak it quickly out of his love for it. Then [the verses] *Stir not your tongue to hasten it. Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the recitation thereof* came down." Q. 75:16

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "Do not speak what We have revealed to you [Muḥammad] until the revealed words have been fully sent to you. When We have completed sending you the revealed words, then you may speak them."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "When a portion of the Qur'ān came down to the Prophet (ṣ), he would move quickly his tongue, out of fear that he would forget it."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the occasion for this being said to [Muḥammad] was his incessant recitation of the Qur'ān out of fear he would forget it. So it was said to him, "*Stir not your tongue to hasten it.* Truly We have put it together for you and will read it to you, so you will not forget it."

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "[The Prophet] would not cease reciting the Qur'ān out of fear that he would forget it, so God said, '*Stir not your tongue to hasten it.* Truly

We have put it together for you and *its recitation* (*Qur'ānahu*). We will recite it to you so you will not forget it.'"[1]

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "[The Prophet] would repeat the Qur'ān incessantly out of fear of forgetfulness, so [God] said to him, 'O Muḥammad, We are sufficient [for safeguarding] it for you.'"

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) would move his tongue rapidly, reciting [the Qur'ān] incessantly, so God said, '*Stir not your tongue to hasten it.* Truly We will safeguard it for you.'"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "The Prophet of God (ṣ) used to move his tongue rapidly out of fear of forgetfulness, so God sent down what you have [just] heard."[2]

Q. 75:17

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Stir not your tongue to hasten it*, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) would recite the Qur'ān incessantly out of fear that he would forget [parts of it]."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The interpretation that most resembles the apparent meaning of the revelation is the one reported from Saʿīd b. Jubayr, on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, because [the following verse] *Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the reading thereof* informs [us] that God forbade moving the tongue with [the Qur'ān] in haste prior to its being put together [in his heart]. It is obvious that the frequent recitation of [the Qur'ān] in order to remember it was done by the Prophet (ṣ) after God put together for him what he should rehearse from it.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the recitation thereof*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together* of this Qur'ān in your chest, O Muḥammad, so that it becomes firmly

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found only in the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ṭabarī and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:468.

2 According to Suyūṭī, this *mursal ḥadīth* is found only in the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd and Ibn al-Mundhir; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:468. He does not mention its inclusion in Ṭabarī's commentary.

established therein, *and Qur'ānahu*. He says: *And Qur'ānahu*, until you recite it after We have put it together in your chest.

OPINION: The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀʾisha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof* in your heart *and Qur'ānahu*, meaning 'you recite it afterwards.'"

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Lo! upon Us (rests) jamʿahu*, "[Meaning:] We put it together for you, *and Qur'ānahu*. We recite it to you, so you do not forget [it]."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the recitation thereof*: It is Our responsibility to put it together for you until we establish it firmly in your chest.

Q. 75:17

OPINION: Others would interpret His statement *Qur'ānahu* as "the collection thereof (*taʾlīfahu*)". It is as if the meaning of the sentence, according to them, is "*Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof* in your heart, until you safeguard it, and its collection."

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abīʿ Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lo! upon Us (rests) jamʿahu wa-Qur'ānahu*, "The safeguarding thereof and collection thereof."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *jamʿahu wa-Qur'ānahu*, "The safeguarding thereof and collection thereof."

It is as if Qatāda understood the meaning of *Qur'ān* as a verbal noun, as in the statement of one who says "This she-camel's belly has joined (*qaraʾat*) with its foetus," when its foetus attaches to its womb. This is like the verse of the poet ʿAmr b. Kulthūm:[1]

dhirāʿay ʿaytalin admāʾa bikrin
hijāni'l-lawni lam taqraʾ janīnā

1 A fragment of this verse of poetry and its commentary is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:278. This is a variant reading of line 12 of ʿAmr b. Kulthum's famous *Muʿallaqa*; see Charles Lyall (ed.), *A Commentary on Ten Ancient Arabic Poems* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1894), 111. A similar discussion occurs above in the Introduction to Ṭabarī's commentary.

Arms of a long-necked she-camel, white and youthful,[1]
The purest white colour, never pregnant.

By his statement *lam taqra'*, he means "she has never had a foetus attached to her womb." As for Ibn ʿAbbās and al-Ḍaḥḥāk, they read *Qur'ān* as the verbal noun derived from the verb *qara'tu aqra'u Qur'ānan wa-qirā'a* ("I read, I am reading a recitation and a reading").

INTERPRETATION OF *And when We recite it, follow its recitation*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of this verse.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its interpretation is: *And when We* send it down to you, listen to its recitation.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr and Ibn Abī Ā'isha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And when qara'nāhu*, "And when We send it down to you, *fa'ttabiʿ its recitation*. He said: Listen to its recitation."

Q. 75:18

Sufyān b. Wakīʿ—Jarīr—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And when qara'nāhu fa'ttabiʿ its recitation*: And when we send it down to you, listen to it.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: When [the Qur'ān] is recited to you, follow the laws and rulings that are in it.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And when We recite it, follow its recitation*, "When it is recited to you, follow what is in it."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And when We recite it, follow its recitation*, "Follow its lawful [things], and avoid its unlawful [things]."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And when We recite it, follow its recitation*, "So follow its lawful [things], and avoid its unlawful [things]."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Follow its recitation*, "Follow what is in it."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: When we clarify it, act in accordance with it.

1 This is Arberry's translation of this hemistich; *The Seven Odes*, 204.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*And when We recite it*, meaning clarify it, *follow its recitation*. He says: Act in accordance with it."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion that is most likely correct, in my estimation, is to say: "And when it is recited to you, act in accordance with its commands and prohibitions, and follow all you have been ordered to do in it, because it has been said to him *Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof in your chest and the recitation thereof.*" We have already indicated that the meaning of His statement *Qur'ānahu* is: "its recitation (*qirā'atahu*)", the meaning of which has been clarified in His statement *And when We recite it, follow its recitation*.

INTERPRETATION OF *Then lo! upon Us (rests) the explanation thereof*

Q. 75:19

God [Exalted is His remembrance] says: *Then lo! upon Us (rests) the explanation* of all that is in it—what is lawful and forbidden, and its rulings for you.

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of that.

OPINION: Some of them said something similar to what we have already said about it.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Then lo! upon Us (rests) bayānahu*, "Its lawful [things] and its forbidden [things]—that is *the explanation thereof*."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Then lo! upon Us (rests) the explanation thereof*, "The explanation of its lawful [things] and avoidance of its unlawful [things] and [explanation] of its acts of disobedience and obedience."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *Then lo! upon Us (rests)* the clarification of it by means of your tongue.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Then lo! upon Us (rests) bayānahu*, "Its clarification, by means of your tongue."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[75:20] *Nay, but you love the fleeting now* [75:21] *And neglect the Hereafter.* [75:22] *That day faces will be resplendent,* [75:23] *Looking towards their Lord;* [75:24] *And that day other faces will be despondent,* [75:25] *You will know that some great disaster is about to fall on them.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His servants, to whom He is addressing this Qur'ān, and who prefer the ornaments of the temporal world over the Hereafter: "O humanity, the matter is not as you claim it to be—that you will not be resurrected after your deaths and that you will not be requited for your deeds. Rather, what led you to claim these things is your love for the fleeting temporal world, and your preference for its delights over the postponed [rewards] and bounties of the Hereafter. You believe in the *fleeting now* while you deny the permanent later," as has been narrated to us by:

Q. 75:20–2

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Nay, but you love the fleeting now and neglect the Hereafter*, "Most people choose the *fleeting now*, except those upon whom God has mercy and protects."

INTERPRETATION OF *That day faces will be resplendent*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*That day*, meaning Resurrection Day, *faces will be nāḍira*: He says: Beautiful, from the bounties." One says, "The face of so-and-so *naḍura*" when it becomes beautiful from well-being. Also, one says, "God *naḍḍara* his face" when He makes it beautiful.

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of this verse.

OPINION: Some of them said what we have just said concerning that.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Muḥāribī[1]—Ādam—al-Mubārak—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *That day faces will be nāḍira*, "Beautiful".

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *That day faces will be nāḍira*, "The *naḍrat* of their faces is their beauty."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid.

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *That day faces will be nāḍira*, "*Nāḍira* means 'blissful'."

1 The editors of the Dār Hajar edition substitute "al-Bukhārī" for "al-Muḥāribī" (23:505). This substitution is not supported by any of the manuscripts or editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, and biographical dictionaries do not generally list Ṭabarī among the students of the famous Bukhārī.

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *That day faces will be nāḍira*, "Beautiful faces."

Ibn Humayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *That day faces will be resplendent*, "From happiness, bliss and joy".

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is [their faces] are happy.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *That day faces will be nāḍira*, "Happy."

INTERPRETATION OF *Looking towards their Lord*

The intepreters disagreed over the interpretation of that.

Q. 75:23

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: [Their faces] will be looking (*tanzuru*) at their Lord.[1]

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Ṭūsī and Ibrāhīm b. Saʿīd al-Jawharī—ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. Shaqīq—al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqid—Yazīd al-Naḥwī—ʿIkrima said, concerning *That day faces will be resplendent, nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They will be looking at their Lord in the literal sense (*naẓaran*)."

Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. Shaqīq—my father—al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqid said, "*That day faces will be resplendent* from bliss, *nāẓira towards their Lord*." Then al-Ḥusayn said, "Yazīd al-Naḥwī informed me, on the authority of ʿIkrima, Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid and senior scholars of Kufa, that they will be looking at their Lord in the literal sense."

1 This verse is frequently cited by Sunni Muslims, who generally believe that God can be seen with the eyes in the Hereafter. Abūʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, Ṭabarī's younger contemporary, records numerous early Muslim opinions on this topic, ranging from the belief that God is visible in the temporal world and the Hereafter, to the belief that He is only visible in the Hereafter, to the belief, espoused by Dirār b. ʿAmr, that God creates a sixth sense in human beings in the Hereafter, which allows them to see God; see Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, 1:287–9. Ṭabarī supports the position that believers will see God with their eyes in the Hereafter here as well as in his theological work, *al-Tabṣīr fī maʿālim al-dīn*; see Ṭabarī, *al-Tabṣīr fī maʿālim al-dīn*, 137, 147, 215–16. In *al-Tabṣīr*, he makes the rational argument that "it is not impossible for anything that is described to be seen," and indicates that a *ḥadīth* specifies that this is only possible in the Hereafter (147). Ṭabarī affirms this position in his short creed and bases it on the well-known *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet Muḥammad said, "Truly you will see your Lord just like you see this moon"; see Ṭabarī, *Sarīḥ al-sunna*, ed. Badr Yūsuf al-Mutūq (Kuwait: Maktabat Ahl al-Athar, 2005), 27–8.

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Muḥāribī[1]—Ādam—al-Mubārak—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *That day faces will be nāḍira*, "Beautiful, *nāẓira towards their Lord*. He said: They will be looking at the Creator, and it is most fitting for them to be resplendent while they are looking towards the Creator."

Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam—Khālid b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Abū ʿArfaja—ʿAṭiyya al-ʿAwfī said, concerning His statement *That day faces will be resplendent, nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They will be looking at God (Mighty and Majestic is He), although their eyes will not be able to encompass His magnitude, even though His vision encompasses them. This is in accordance with His statement, *No vision can encompass Him, but He encompasses all vision* (Q.6:103)."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: [Their faces] will be awaiting (*tantaẓiru*) the reward from their Lord.[2]

An account of those who said that:

Q. 75:23 Abū Kurayb—ʿUmar b. ʿUbayd—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *That day faces will be resplendent, nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They will be awaiting the reward from Him."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They will be awaiting the reward from their Lord."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They are awaiting the reward."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They are awaiting the reward from their Lord. Nothing from His creation can see Him."

Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Masʿūdī—my father—his father—his grandfather—al-Aʿmash—Mujāhid said, "*That day faces will be nāḍira* from bliss, *nāẓira towards their Lord*. He said: They will be awaiting God's provision and bounty."

[1] Following the text of the ancient manuscript of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, rather than the Dār Hajar editors' substitution of "al-Bukhārī" for "al-Muḥāribī"; 23:507 (note 4).

[2] According to Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, all of the Muʿtazila and Khārijīs, and some of the Murji'a and Zaydīs, categorically rejected the belief that God can be seen by the eyes; *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, 1:289. Imāmī Shīʿa since at least the fifth/eleventh century and all surviving Zaydīs can also be added to this list. Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār reiterates the traditional Muʿtazila denial of God's visibility, namely, that only bodies can be seen and therefore, since God is not confined to a body, He can never be seen; see his *Tanzih al-Qur'ān 'an al-mata'in*, 442.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr said, "Some people were saying in a *ḥadīth*, 'They will see their Lord,' so I said to Mujāhid, 'Truly some people are saying that God will be seen.' Mujāhid said, '[God] sees but nothing in His creation can see Him.'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They will be awaiting what their Lord has designated for them."

Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb al-Ḥassānī—Mālik b. Suʿayr—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning His statement *That day faces will be resplendent, nāẓira towards their Lord*, "They will be awaiting the reward."

Abū Kurayb—Ashjaʿī—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Thuwayr—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿUmar said, "Truly the lowest level of the inhabitants of the Garden are those who will look at [God's] dominion, Throne and servants from the distance covered over a 1,000 year journey. They will see its farthest point just as they see its nearest point. Truly the most elevated inhabitants of the Garden will look towards the Face of God, mornings and evenings." Q. 75:23

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—a shaykh[1]—Abū Ṣuhbā' al-Mawṣilī said, "Truly the lowest inhabitants of the Garden are those who see [God's] Throne, servants and dominion from the distance covered over a 1,000-year journey. They will see its farthest point just as they see its nearest point. The most excellent level of the inhabitants of the Garden hosts those who look towards the Face of God, mornings and evenings."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likey to be correct, in our estimation, is the opinion we have mentioned on the authority of al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] and ʿIkrima—the meaning of that is they will be looking at their Creator. A report from the Messenger of God (ṣ) has come to us in support of [this interpretation]:

ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥurr[2]—Muṣʿab b. al-Miqdām—Isrāʾīl b. Yūnus—Thuwayr—Ibn ʿUmar said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Truly the lowest level of the inhabitants of the Garden will be for those folk who look at His dominion [from the distance covered by] a 2,000-year [journey], whereas truly the most excellent one will be for those who look at the Face of God twice a day, every day." Then he recited, *That day faces will be resplendent, looking towards their Lord*. He said, "[Their faces will be] white and pure, *nāẓira towards their Lord*." He said, "Every

[1] Following the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* (23:509). Other editions had "Ashjaʿ".

[2] Following the Dār Hajar edition (23:510). Other editions have Abjur.

ūda said, concerning *You will know that some fāqira is about to fall on them,*
d thing".
Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His
ement *You will know that some fāqira is about to fall on them,* "You think
they will enter Hellfire. This is the *fāqira.*"
The original meaning of *fāqira* is: "a brand or mark that is imprinted
he nose."[1]

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

:26] *Nay, but when it comes up to the throat* [75:27] *And it is said, Where is the charm-healer?* [75:28] *And he knows that it is the parting;*
[75:29] *And hardship is joined with hardship;* [75:30]
To your Lord that day will be the driving.

Q. 75:26-7

d (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The matter is not as these poly-
ists think—that they will not be punished for their association of
ties with and disobedience of their Lord. Rather, as the soul of each
e of them *comes up to the throat* (*tarāqī*) at the time of his death and rattles
t, [the following things will happen].
Ibn Zayd said, "The *tarāqī* is his soul [instead of his throat]," as I have
en informed by:
Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning the
tement of God (Mighty and Majestic is He) *Nay, but when it comes up to*
tarāqī, "The *tarāqī* is his soul."

TERPRETATION OF *And it is said, Where is the charm-healer?*

od (Exalted is His remembrance) says: This man's family will say, "*Where*
he charm healer (man rāqin)[2] who can produce a charm for him to heal him
om what has afflicted him?" They will seek doctors and healers, none of
nom will be of any use to him in affecting in the slightest the command
God, which has afflicted him.
The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of His statement *Where*
he charm-healer (man rāqin)?
INION: Some of them said something similar to what we have just
d concerning that.

[1] This definition is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān,* 2:278.
[2] Following the reading of the Dār Hajar edition; 23: 512.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb and Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Isrāʾīl—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning *And it is said, Where is the rāq?*, "Is there *a charm-healer* who can heal [him] with a charm?"

Abū Kurayb and Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Shabīb—Abū Qilāba said, concerning *And it is said, Where is the rāq?*, "Is there a doctor who can heal [him]?"

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Shabīb—Abū Qilāba; and Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sulaymān al-Taymī—Shabīb—Abū Qilāba.[1]

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa—Marwān b. Muʿāwiya—Abū Bisṭām—al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim said, concerning God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) *And it is said, Where is the rāq?*, "He is the doctor."

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Idrīs—Juwaybir—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning *And it is said, Where is the rāq?*, "Is there a healer?"

Q. 75:27

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And it is said: Where is the rāq?*, "In other words, [*it is said*] 'Bring him doctors!' but they will be of no avail to him in the face of God's decree."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And it is said, Where is the rāq?*, "Where are the doctors and the charm-healers (*ruqāt*) who can use charms to protect him from death?"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, this is the statement of the angels, some of whom say to others, "Who will bring up his soul and ascend with it?"[2]

Abū Hishām—Muʿādh b. Hishām—my father—ʿAmr b. Mālik—Abūʾl-Jawzāʾ—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Nay, but when it comes up to the throat and it is said, Where is the rāq?*, "When his soul comes up to his throat,[3] the angels say, 'Who will bring him up—the angels of mercy or the angels of punishment?'"

Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—al-Muʿtamir [b. Sulaymān al-Taymī]—his father said, concerning His statement *And it is said, Where is the charm-healer?*, "It has reached me that Abū Qilāba said, 'Is there any doctor? It also has reached

1 This *isnād* is missing from most manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 23:513.
2 The verb *raqiya* means "to heal with charms" while the verb *raqiya* means "to ascend"; the active participle for both verbs is *rāq*, which is the word under discussion in this verse.
3 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *tarāqiyahu*; 23:514 (note 4). The manuscripts display considerable confusion over this word.

me that Abūʾl-Jawzāʾ said, 'Some of the angels say to others, "Who will bring [him up]—the angels of mercy or the angels of punishment?"'"

INTERPRETATION OF *And he knows that it is the parting*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The person upon whom this calamity falls becomes certain that this is *the parting* from the temporal world, family, wealth and children.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And he knows that it is al-firāq*, "In other words, he becomes certain that this is *the parting*."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And he knows that it is al-firāq*, "No one whom God creates is able to repel death, or disown it; rather, he does not know whether he will die from one illness or another one, so his knowledge [of how he will die] is as it is described here."

Q. 75:28–

INTERPRETATION OF *And hardship is joined with hardship*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of this verse.[1]

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: The hardship of worldly affairs *is heaped upon* the hardship of the affairs of the Hereafter.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Muʿādh b. Hishām—my father—ʿAmr b. Mālik—Abūʾl-Jawzāʾ—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The hardship of the temporal world [*is joined*] with that of the Hereafter."

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The last day of the temporal world and the first day of the Hereafter—the hardships of one connect with those of the other, except for he upon whom God has mercy."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd

1 The key word in this verse is *sāq*, which generally means "leg" or "shank". (Pickthall translated it as as "agony", while Arberry and Abdel Haleem preferred the literal translation of "leg".) However, in this context, many early Muslim interpreters felt that "leg" was not the appropriate meaning, and Ṭabarī's preferred meaning, as we will see below, is "hardship".

al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "*And* the temporal world *is joined with* the Hereafter, and this is the condition[1] of the temporal world and the Hereafter. Have you not heard Him say, *To your Lord that day will be the driving* (*masāq*)?"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The affairs of the temporal world are joined with those of the Hereafter at the time of death."

Abū Kurayb and Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—a man—Mujāhid said, "The last day of the temporal world and the first day of the Hereafter."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*: al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "The *sāq* of the temporal world [is joined] with the [*sāq* of the] Hereafter."[2]

Q. 75:29

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Mujāhid said, "These are the affairs of the temporal world and the Hereafter at the time of death."

ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn—Yaḥyā b. Yamān—Abū Sinān al-Shaybānī—Thābit—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The people of the temporal world prepare the body [of the deceased] while the people of the Hereafter prepare the spirit."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Sinān—al-Ḍaḥḥāk.[3]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "Two matters are brought together: people prepare his body and angels prepare his spirit."

Abū Hishām—Muḥāribī—Juwaybir—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "The *sāq* of the temporal world [*is joined*] with the *sāq* of the Hereafter."[4]

1 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *sha'n* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *sāq*; Dār Hajar, 23:516.

2 It is not obvious from this report how al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī interprets the meaning of *sāq*, so I have left it untranslated. Note that this report, along with the four reports preceding it, are absent from the ancient manuscript of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; Dār Hajar, 23:516 (note 1).

3 The Dār Hajar edition has several additional reports here that are not found in earlier print editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. Note that the manuscripts diverge significantly in this section, and the editors of the Dār Hajar appear to be collating all of the reports found in them, rather than selecting some of them in favour of others; Dār Hajar, 23:517 and *passim*.

4 It is unclear from this report how al-Ḍaḥḥāk interprets *sāq*, so I left it untranslated.

Abū Hishām—ʿAbd Allāh—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ said, "The temporal world [*is joined*] with the Hereafter."

A similar report was narrated to us from Abū Hishām—Jaʿfar b. Awn—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ, who added, "It has been alleged that their joining occurs at the time of death."

Abū Hishām—Ibn Yamān—Fuḍayl b. Marzūq—ʿAṭiyya said, "The temporal world and the Hereafter."

Abū Hishām—Ibn Yamān—ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Mujāhid—his father said, "The affairs of the temporal world [are joined] with the affairs of the Hereafter."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The affairs of the temporal world [are joined] with the affairs of the Hereafter."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "Hardship [is joined] with hardship, the *sāq* of the temporal world with the *sāq* of the Hereafter."

Q. 75:29

Ibn al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba said, "I asked Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid [about this verse] and he said, 'The deeds of the temporal world [are joined] with the deeds of the Hereafter.'"

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Salama—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "These two [*sāqs*] are the temporal world and the Hereafter."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The scholars have two opinions concerning this verse. Some of them say: The *sāq* of the Hereafter [is joined] with the *sāq* of the temporal world. Others say: Few people die without having one leg (*sāq*) joined with the other." Ibn Zayd said, "Despite this [disagreement], we do not doubt that this verse refers to the *sāq* of the Hereafter." Then [Ibn Zayd] recited, *To your Lord that day will be the driving* and said, "When the Hereafter *is joined* with the temporal world, *the driving* will be to God (Mighty and Majestic is He). This is the opinion of the majority of people who have this interpretation."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is the two legs of the deceased are joined when they are wrapped in the burial shroud.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Bashīr b. al-Muhājir—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "[The two legs] become entwined in the burial shroud."

Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ and Ibn al-Yamān—Bashīr b. al-Muhājir—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "They are your two legs when they become entwined in the burial shroud."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Bashīr b. al-Muhājir—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī].

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: The legs of the deceased become entwined at death.

An account of those who said that:

Humayd b. Masʿada—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī] said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The two legs of the deceased."

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī] said, "His two legs are *joined* at death."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn al-Muthannā—Ibn Abī ʿAdī—Dāwūd—Shaʿbī.

Q. 75:29

Another nearly identical report was narrated to us from Isḥāq b. Shāhīn—Khālid—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī].

Abū Kurayb and Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ḥusayn—Abū Mālik said, "*And sāq is joined with sāq* at death."

Abū Hishām—ʿUbayd Allāh—Isrāʾīl—Suddī—Abū Mālik said, "Your two legs become entwined at death."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "The entwining of both [legs] is by the command of God."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "The two legs of the son of Adam at death."

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ismāʿīl al-Suddī—Abū Mālik said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "They are his two legs when they are brought together, one against the other."

Ibn Bashshār and Ibn al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Qatāda said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "Have you not seen him, when he strikes one leg with the other one?"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "Both of his legs have died and cannot carry him anywhere. He used to be able to run great distances upon them."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—

Suddī—Abū Mālik said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "His two legs at death".

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is their [legs'] dryness at death.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Suddī—Abū Mālik said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "Their [legs'] dryness at death."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Hishām—Ibn Yamān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Suddī.

OPINION: Others said: The meaning of that is: An affair (*amr*) is joined with another affair.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb and Abū Hishām—Wakīʿ—Ibn Abī Khālid—Abū ʿĪsā said, concerning *And sāq is joined with sāq*, "An affair [is joined] with an affair."

Q. 75:29

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is the joining of one trial with another.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Hishām—ʿUbayd Allāh—Isrāʾīl—Abū Yaḥyā—Mujāhid said, "A trial [is joined] with a trial."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely sound, in my estimation, is to say: The meaning of that is that the *sāq* of the temporal world *is joined with* the *sāq* of the Hereafter. [In other words], the hardship of the calamity of death [is joined] with the hardship of the terror of the Lookout (*maṭlaʿ*). The following verse is evidence in support of this interpretation: *To your Lord that day will be the driving* (*masāq*). For every hardship that befalls them, the Arabs say, "He hiked up his garment [displaying] his leg" or "He revealed his leg."[1] For example, the statement of the poet,

fa-idh shammarat laka ʿan sāqihā
fa-wayhan Rabiʿa wa-lā tasʾami

When the calamity befalls you,[2]
Go on, Rabīʿ, and be not weary!

What is meant by His statement *And sāq is joined with sāq* is that one of

1 Arabic: *shammara ʿan sāqih* and *kashafa ʿan sāqih*.
2 Literally, "When she hikes up her garment to you, displaying her leg."

the two hardships becomes affixed to the other one, just as one uses *laffa* to describe the woman who presses one of her two thighs to the other.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *To your Lord that day will be the driving*

He says: O Muḥammad, on the day when *sāq* is joined with *sāq*, [each person] will be driven *to your Lord*.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[75:31] *For he neither believed, nor prayed.* [75:32] *But he denied and flouted.* [75:33] *Then went he to his folk with glee.* [75:34] *Nearer to you and nearer,* [75:35] *Again nearer to you and nearer.* [75:36] *Does man think that he is to be left aimless?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He did not believe in the Book of God, nor did he pray the [obligatory] prayers to Him; rather, *he denied and flouted* the Book of God, and turned his back on the obedience of God. Q. 75:30–3

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *For he neither believed, nor prayed,* "*He neither believed* in the Book of God, *nor prayed* to God, *but he denied and flouted. He denied* the Book of God *and flouted* obedience to God."

INTERPRETATION OF *Then went he to his folk with glee*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Then* he went *to his folk,* proceeding to them with a stately gait, prancing (*yatabakhtaru*).

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Then went he to his folk yatamaṭṭā,* "In other words, he walked with a stately gait, prancing."

Saʿīd b. ʿAmr al-Sakūnī—Baqiyya b. al-Walīd—Mubashshir b. ʿUbayd—Zayd b. Aslam said, concerning His statement *Then went he to his folk yatamaṭṭā,* "He walked with a stately gait, prancing. This is the gait of Banū Makhzūm."[2]

1 This sentence is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān,* 3:212.

2 Banū Makhzūm was one of the noble clans of the Quraysh, whose members included the heroic general Khālid b. al-Walīd and Umm Salama, one of the Prophet Muḥammad's wives. Its members also included Abū Jahl.

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Mūsā b. ʿUbayda—Ismāʿīl b. Umayya—Mujāhid said, concerning *Then went he to his folk yatamaṭṭā,* "[I] saw a Qurayshī man walking, and said, 'This person walks the same way as the person [in this verse] walks.' The man was walking with a stately gait."

[Muḥammad] ibn Abd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *yatamaṭṭā,* "He walks with a stately gait, prancing. This is Abū Jahl b. Hishām, since this was his gait."

It has been alleged that this verse came down on account of Abū Jahl.[1]

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *yatamaṭṭā,* "Abū Jahl".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *For he neither believed, nor prayed, but he denied and flouted. Then went he to his folk with glee,* "This is about Abū Jahl, who walked with a stately gait." Q. 75:34–5

What is meant by His statement *yatamaṭṭā* is "one who arches his back in a stately gait." The word *maṭā* means "back".[2] There is a report in which the Messenger of God (ṣ) says, "When my community will walk with a self-conceited gait (*mutayṭāʾa*) [and the Persians and Byzantines serve them, there will be strife among them],"[3] and that is a man who walks with his hands extended in front of him, while inclining forward.[4]

INTERPRETATION OF *Nearer to you and nearer, again nearer to you and nearer*

This is a threat from God (Mighty and Majestic is He) against Abū Jahl's threat [to Muḥammad], as we have been informed by:

1 Abū Jahl was one of the core antagonists of the Prophet Muḥammad in Mecca whom the Muslims killed at the battle of Badr. His proper name was Abūʾl-Ḥakam ʿAmr b. Hishām and he belonged to the Makhzūm clan of the Quraysh; see W. Montgomery Watt, "Abū Djahl", *EI²*.

2 This is close to what is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān,* 3:212.

3 The second half of this *ḥadīth,* which Tabarī does not mention, is found in *Lisān al-ʿArab* under the entry *m-ṭ-ṭ*. The only canonical collection in which it is found is Tirmidhī, *Sunan* (*Kitāb al-fitan: bāb* 74: [no title]). This hadith has a slightly different wording from the narration found in *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Tirmidhī evaluates this *ḥadīth* as "unusual (*gharīb*)".

4 Arabic: *wa-dhālika an yulqiya'l-rajulu bi-yadayhi wa-yatakaffaʾ*. This is close to what Abū ʿUbayda says, although the latter does not mention this *ḥadīth*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān,* 2:278. See also Lane, "*m-ṭ-ṭ*".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Nearer to you and nearer, again nearer to you and nearer*, "A threat against a threat, as you will hear." He claimed that this verse was sent down on account of the enemy of God, Abū Jahl. It has been reported to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) seized him by the seams of his clothes and said, *Nearer to you and nearer, again nearer to you and nearer*. The enemy of God, Abū Jahl, replied, "Is Muḥammad threatening me? By God! Neither you nor your Lord has the capacity to [harm] me one bit. By God! I am the most powerful person who walks between these two mountains!"[1]

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "The Prophet (ṣ) took his hand, meaning Abū Jahl's hand, and said *Nearer to you and nearer, again nearer to you and nearer*. He replied, 'O Muḥammad, neither you nor your Lord can do anything to me. I am the most powerful person[2] between these two mountains.' At the battle of Badr, he was in charge of [the Meccans] and said, 'God will not be worshipped after today!' Then God struck his neck and killed him in a most horrible way."

Q. 75:35

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Nearer to you and nearer, again nearer to you and nearer*: Abū Jahl said, "Muḥammad is actually threatening me, even though I am the most powerful man in Mecca and its environs." Then he recited, *Then let him call upon his henchmen! We will call the guards of Hell. Nay, obey not him. But prostrate yourself, and draw near* (*to God*; Q.96:17–19).

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Mūsā b. Abī ʿĀ'isha said, "I said to Saʿīd b. Jubayr, 'Did the Messenger of God (ṣ) say anything on the basis of his own will or did God (Mighty and Majestic is He) command him to say what he said?' He replied, 'No, he said [some things] on the basis of his own will, then God (Mighty and Majestic is He) sent down: *Nearer to you and nearer, again nearer to you and nearer*.'"[3]

1 According to Suyūṭī, this is part of a longer *mursal hadith* from Qatāda that is found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd and Ibn al-Mundhir; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:478. He does not mention its presence in Tabarī's commentary. The "two mountains" are Safa and Marwa in Mecca.

2 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *man* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *mashā*; Dār Ḥajar, 23:525.

3 According to Suyūṭī, this *mursal hadith* is also found in the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; the *Sunan* of Saʿīd b. Manṣūr; the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim; and one of Tabarānī's books; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:479. Note that Suyūṭī's narration of this report puts the question in the mouth of Saʿīd b. Jubayr and the response in the mouth of Ibn ʿAbbās, removing the transmitter gap in Ṭabarī's narration.

INTERPRETATION OF *Does man think that he is to be left aimless?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Does* this *man* who rejects God *think that he is to be left* totally free (*hamalan*); in other words, without being commanded or forbidden [from doing anything], or made obligated to perform acts of worship?

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Does man think that he is to be left sudan?*, "Totally free".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Does man think that he is to be left sudan?*, "Without being commanded or forbidden [from anything]."

Q. 75:36–7

Yūnus [b. Abd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Does man think that he is to be left sudan?*, "The [person who is] *sudā* is he for whom no act has been made obligatory, and who does nothing [that God has commanded him to do]."

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[75:37] Was he not a drop of sperm which gushed forth? [75:38] *Then he became a clot; then* (*God*) *shaped and fashioned* [75:39] *And made of him a pair, the male and female.* [75:40] *Is not He* (*Who does so*) *able to bring the dead to life?*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Was not this person who denies God's ability (Mighty and Majestic is He) to revive him after his death and bring him back to existence after his annihilation *a drop*, meaning a tiny amount of fluid [near the base of] the man's backbone, *of sperm*?

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the correct reading of *gushed forth*. Most of the Medinan and Kufan reciters read *tumnā*, with a *tāʾ*, meaning "the drop (*nutfa*) gushed forth." Some of the Meccan and Basran reciters read *yumnā*, with a *yāʾ*, meaning: "the sperm (*manī*) gushed forth."[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that is that they are both

1 A similar analysis of these readings is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:213. Ibn ʿAṭiyya identifies Ibn ʿĀmir, Ḥafṣ, Ibn Muḥayṣin, Juḥdarī and Yaʿqūb as reading *yumnā*, while most of the "Seven Reciters" read *tumnā*; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:407.

well-known readings and sound in meaning, so the reciter will be correct reading either one of them.

INTERPRETATION OF *Then he became a clot*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: Then he was [a drop] of blood after being a drop[1] of sperm; *then* (*God*) *shaped and fashioned*. God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: God made it a man after it had been a drop, then a clot; and then He fashioned him into a human, evenly-balanced, speaking, hearing and seeing.

INTERPRETATION OF *And made of him a pair, the male and female*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He made from this person—after He fashioned him as an evenly balanced creature—his children, both male and female.

❁

Q. 75:38-40

INTERPRETATION OF *Is not He* (*Who does so*) *able to bring the dead to life?*

❁

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Is not* the One Who does this—Who created man from a drop, then [made him] a clot, [and continued enlarging him] until he became a well-balanced human, who has male and female children—*able to bring the dead to life* after their deaths and bring them back into existence as they had been prior to their deaths? He says: It is obvious that the One Who has the power to create humans from *a drop of sperm which gushed forth* to the point that He makes them become a well-balanced people cannot be incapable of reviving the deceased after their deaths.

After he recited this [verse], the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Of course [He can]!" [We have been informed of this by]:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Is not He* (*Who does so*) *able to bring the dead to life?*, "It has been mentioned to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) would say, after reciting this verse, 'Glory to You! Of course [You can]!'"[2]

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Qiyāma

1 The Dār Hajar edition fills a lacuna here found in the earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 23:527.

2 Although this *ḥadīth* is *mursal*, Suyūṭī indicates that a *ḥadīth* found in the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī, on the authority of Abū Hurayra, as well as several others, attests that the Prophet Muḥammad would say "Of course (*balā*)" or something to that effect after reciting this verse; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:479.

❁

THE MOST HIGH
SŪRAT AL-AʿLĀ
(Q. 87:1–19)

❁

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[87:1] *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High,* [87:2] *Who creates, then evens;* [87:3] *Who measures, then guides;* [87:4] *Who brings forth the pasturage,* [87:5] *Then turns it to russet stubble.* [87:6] *We shall make you recite so that you shall not forget* [87:7] *Save that which God wills. Lo! He knows the disclosed and that which still is hidden*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpertation of His statement *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High.*

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: "Magnify your Lord the Most High—there is no Lord higher or greater than Him." Some of them would [add] "Glory to my Lord, the Most High"[1] when they recited this verse.

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "Ibn ʿUmar would recite [the beginning of this *sūra* as] "*Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High*, Glory to my Lord the Most High, *Who creates, then balances.*" The recitation of Ubayy b. Kaʿb is also like this.

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Suddī—Abd Khayr said, "I heard ʿAlī (r) recite *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High* and then say, 'Glory to my Lord, the Most High.'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAnbasa—Abū Isḥāq al-Hamdānī—Ibn ʿAbbās would say, "Glory to my Lord the Most High," after reciting *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High.* When he reached the end of *I swear by the Day of Resurrection* (Q.75)—*Is not He* [*Who does so*] *able to bring*

1 Arabic: *subḥāna rabbiʾl-aʿlā*. This is also what is said to oneself by most Muslims while in the position of prostration in the formal prayers (*salāt*).

the dead to life (Q.75:40)—he would say, "Glory to You, O God, yes!"

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "It has been mentioned to us that the Prophet of God (ṣ) would say, 'Glory to my Lord, the Most High,' after reciting *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High*."[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Khārija—Dāwūd—Ziyād b. ʿAbd Allāh said, "I heard Ibn ʿAbbās recite, during the sunset prayer, '*Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High*, Glory to my Lord, the Most High.'"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: "O Muḥammad, declare the Name of God the Most High to be free (*nazzih*) from being given to anything other than Him." With that [verse, God] forbade him from doing what the polytheists did, [by their] naming one of their deities al-Lāt and [another] one al-ʿUzzā.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Declare God to be free from all that these polytheists say about Him, just as He said, *Revile not those to whom they pray beside God, lest they wrongfully revile God through ignorance* (Q.6:108). They said: The meaning of that is "Glorify your Lord Most High"; [the word] *Name* is not an entity (*maʿnā*) [in this context].[2] Q. 87:1

OPINION: Others said: [The meaning of this verse is:] O Muḥammad, only declare your invocation of the Name of your Lord the Most High and His remembrance when you are in a state of submission and humility to Him. They said: What was meant by *Name* (*ism*) in this context is: "invocation", except that the noun has been substituted for the verbal noun "naming, invoking" [*tasmiya* in this verse].[3]

OPINION: Still others said: The meaning of His statement *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High* is: O Muḥammad, pray by remembering *your Lord the Most High*. By that He means: Pray while you are remembering Him and in a state of fear of Him.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in our estimation, is the opinion of those who say that its meaning is: "Declare the Name of God to be free from being used to invoke the deities and idols." [This understanding is] according to the reports I have mentioned, on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ) and the Companions, that they would say, "Glory to my Lord, the Most High" after reading this verse. It is clear from [these reports] that the meaning of this verse was understood by them as: "Magnify and declare free from anything else the Name of your Lord."

1 Suyūṭī only ascribes this *mursal ḥadīth* to the Qur'ānic commentary of ʿAbd b. Humayd, without mentioning its presence here; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:566.

2 The Arabic reads *qālū: laysa'l-ismu ma'nan*; see 24:310 of the Dār Hajar edition of Tabarī's *Tafsīr* and 30:151 of the Halabī edition. In other words, the reciter is being commanded to glorify God rather than to glorify God's Name. This is the opinion of the Muʿtazilī theologian Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār; *Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-mata'īn*, 459.

3 Recall this is how Tabarī interpreted the word *ism* in the *basmallah* at the beginning of his Qur'ān commentary, see volume 1.

INTERPRETATION OF *Who creates, then evens*

He says: [Your Lord the Most High] *Who creates* all things *and evens* his creation and balances it.

The meaning of *taswiya* is: "to even out, balance".

INTERPRETATION OF *Who measures, then guides*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Who measures* out His creatures, *then guides*. Q. 87:2-

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *then hadā*.

OPINION: Some of them said: *He guides* humans to the path of good and evil, and beasts to their pastures.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *Who measures fa-hadā*, "He guides humans to sorrow [in Hellfire] and bliss [in the Garden], and guides livestock to their pastures."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: "He guides male genitals to female genitals," and we have already mentioned the narrations in support of this interpretation earlier in this book.[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct interpretation regarding that, in our estimation, is that God left unspecified the statement *He guides* in reference to guiding His creatures and did not specify one [type of guidance] to the exclusion of another. He guides them to the path of good and evil, and he guides male genitals to female genitals. The statement is to be taken in a general sense unless a report is brought forth that is a proof indicating that the the statement is to be specified.

1 See Tabarī's commentary on Q.20:50 (not included in this translation). This opinion is also found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:256.

All of the Qur'ān reciters of the Islamic cities read *qaddara* (*measured*) with a *shadda* on the *dāl*, except for Kisā'ī, who read it without a *shadda* (*qadara*).

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct reading is with a *shadda*, due to the consensus of the evidence in support of it.

INTERPRETATION OF *Who brings forth the pasturage*

He says: *Who brings forth* many types of plants and varieties of grasses from the earth, as pasturage for livestock.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ya'qūb b. Mukarram—Ḥafarī—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Abū Razīn said, concerning *Who brings forth al-mar'ā*, "Plants".

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray'—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Who brings forth al-mar'ā*, "Variegated plants,[1] like you see, between yellow, red and white."

Q. 87:4-5

INTERPRETATION OF *Then turns it to russet stubble*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He turns this pasturage to *ghuthā'*, which are dried out plants that are scattered in the wind. What is meant by this here is that He makes them crushed and dried out, and changes their colour to *huwwa*, which is black, after they had been white or green, due to the severity of their dryness.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

'Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [*Abd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Mu'āwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—'Alī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *ghuthā'an aḥwā*, "Crushed, discoloured".

Muḥammad b. 'Amr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū 'Āṣim [al-Nabīl]—'Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both 'Īsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *ghuthā'an aḥwā*, "The *ghuthā'* of a torrent or dry waterbed; *aḥwā* means black."

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray'—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *ghuthā'an aḥwā*, "They turn dry after having been green."

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His

1 Following the reading of *shatit al-nabāt* in the Dār Hajar edition; 30:313 (note 1).

statement *Then turns it to ghuthā'an aḥwā*, "It used to be green herbage and plants, then it dried out and became desiccated, becoming *ghuthā'an aḥwā*. The winds and torrents scatter it."

One of the experts in the Arabic language[1] considered this to be a case of inversion, because its meaning is really: "*Who brings forth the pasturage aḥwā*, meaning [ranging from] green to black, *then turns it to stubble* afterwards." He brings forth the following verse of Dhū'l-Rumma as evidence in support of this:

ḥawwā'u qarhā'u ashrātiyyatun wa-kafat
fihā'l-dhihābu wa-haffathā'l-barā'imu

[A garden], appearing black, with a white centre, well watered
by the twin rain-bearing horns of Aries
Satisfied with only a light rain, surrounded by blossoms.

The opinion [that *aḥwā* means "dark green" in this Qur'ānic verse], despite the irrefutable evidence that Arabs call plants "black" when their green colour is extremely intense, is incorrect in my opinion. [This opinion is incorrect] because it contravenes the position of the interpreters, which restricts inversion of words or phrases outside of their literal sense (or word order) to cases that only can be understood by means of an inversion of some kind.[2] If the passage can be understood in a sound manner in its literal sense (or word order), then there is no way to insist upon the presence of an inversion.

Q. 87:6

INTERPRETATION OF *We shall make you recite so that you shall not forget save that which God wills*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O Muḥammad, *We shall make you recite* this Qur'ān *so that you shall not forget* it, *save that which God wills.*

Then the interpreters disagreed over the meaning of His statement *so that you shall not forget save that which God wills.*

OPINION: Some of them said: This is an announcement from God to His Prophet (upon him blessings and peace) that He will teach him this Qur'ān and preserve it with him; and He forbids him from rushing his recitation of it, just as He said (Majestic is His praise), *Stir not your tongue*

1 This is the opinion of al-Farrā', although the verse of poetry comes from Abū 'Ubayda; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:256; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:295

2 I have eschewed a literal English translation of this long Arabic sentence for the sake of clarity; see Dār Hajar, 30:314. In short, Ṭabarī is saying that one can only declare a case of inversion in cases of absolute necessity.

to hasten it. Lo! upon Us (rests) the putting together thereof and the reading thereof (Q.75:14–15).[1]

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *We shall make you recite so that you shall not forget*, "[The Prophet] used to repeat the Qur'ān to himself out of fear that he would forget [some of it]."

The people of this opinion read the exception in this context as applying to "forgetfulness". The meaning is: "You will not forget except that which God wills for you to forget and not mention again." They said. Those are [the verses] God has abrogated in the Qur'ān, for He removed both their rulings and the recitation of their words [from the Qur'ān].

An account of those who said that:

Q. 87:6 Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *We shall make you recite so that you shall not forget*, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) would not forget anything, *save that which God wills*."

OPINION: Others said: The meaning of "forgetfulness" in this context is "to abandon (*tark*)". They said: The meaning of the passage is: O Muḥammad, *We shall make you recite*, so do not abandon acting in accordance with what is in it, *save that which God wills* you to abandon doing, among [the rulings] We have abrogated.

One of the experts in the Arabic language[2] said, concerning this: God does not actually will [the Prophet] to forget anything, just as He says *Abiding there [in the Garden] so long as the heavens and the earth endure save for that which your Lord wills* (Q.11:108), though He does not [actually] will [their abiding in it]. He said: It is as if you were to say, "I will give you all that you asked me, except what I will," meaning: "except what I will to refrain from giving you," with the intention that you will neither refrain from giving anything, nor willing anything. [Al-Farrāʾ] said, "The person who, when he swears oaths, adds the final clause, 'If God wills,' is [to be understood] in the same vein. His intention is the completion of the oath."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion which is most likely to be correct, in my

1 See the previous chapter for a translation Ṭabarī's commentary on these verses.
2 This is the opinion and argument of al-Farrāʾ; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:256.

estimation, is for one to say: The meaning of that is: "So that you shall not forget except that which We make you forget by means of abrogation and its removal [from the Qur'ān]." We only said this is the interpretation that is most likely to be correct because it is the most obvious of its meanings.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! He knows the disclosed and that which still is hidden*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo!* God *knows* which of your deeds are *disclosed*, which you have made visible and public, O Muḥammad, *and that which still is hidden*. He says: [God knows] that which you hide from Him and do not make visible, among [the things] you have concealed. He says: He knows all of your deeds—the secret and the public. He says: Beware that He is observing you when you do something He has not authorized you to do in one of your situations.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS: Q. 87:7–10

[87:8] *And We shall ease your way into the state of ease.* [87:9] *Therefore remind, if the reminder is of use.* [87:10] *He will heed who fears,*
[87:11] *But the most wretched will flout it—* [87:12] *He who will be flung into the great Fire* [87:13]
Wherein he will neither die nor live.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O Muḥammad, We shall facilitate for you the performance of good deeds, and this is *the state of ease (yusrā)*.

The word *yusrā* is the nominal form *fuʿlā* of the word *yusr* [which means "ease"].

INTERPRETATION OF *Therefore remind, if the reminder is of use*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Therefore*, O Muḥammad, *remind* the servants of God about His greatness, preach to them, and warn them of His punishment, *if the reminder is of use*. He says: If the reminder is of use for the people of whose faith I have made you despair, [remind them with it]; otherwise the reminder is not of any benefit to them. His statement *Therefore remind* is a command from God to His Prophet (ṣ) to remind all of humanity. Then He says: *If the reminder is of use* with these people of whose faith I have made you despair [of achieving].

INTERPRETATION OF *He will heed who fears*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: O Muḥammad, among those folk whom

you reminded because I commanded you to remind them, *he* who fears God and His punishment *will heed. But [the most wretched] will flout it.* He says: *But the most wretched will flout* the reminder, meaning *the most wretched* of the two groups, *who will be flung into the great Fire.* They are the people for whom the reminder is of no benefit.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Therefore remind, if the reminder is of use. He will heed who fears,* "So fear God—no single servant fears God save the one who heeds Him." [Qatāda said, concerning] *But the most wretched will flout it,* "By God! No servant will eschew this reminder, renouncing it and hating the people who [believe in] it, save a wretched person, whose wretchedness is clear [for all to see]."

Q. 87:11–13

INTERPRETATION OF *He who will be flung into the great Fire*

He says: *He who will* enter the fire of Gehenna, which is *the great Fire.* It is called *great* due to the intensity of its heat and the pain [it inflicts].

INTERPRETATION OF *Wherein he will neither die nor live*

He says: Then *he will neither die nor live* in *the great Fire.* This is due to his soul coming up to his throat and neither coming out of it, thereby [not] causing death by becoming detached from his body, nor returning to the part of the body [from which it came], allowing him to live. This has also been understood to mean: *Wherein he will neither die,* finding rest, *nor live* a life from which he can benefit.[1]

Others said: That is said because when the Arabs would describe a man who is in a terribly difficult situation, they would say, "He is neither alive nor is he dead." So God addressed them using the expression they would use in their speech.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[87:14] *He is successful who purifies himself,* [87:15] *And remembers the Name of his Lord, and so prays;* [87:16] *But you prefer the life of the world* [87:17] *Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting.* [87:18] *Lo! this is in the former Scrolls;* [87:19] *The Scrolls of Abraham and Moses.*

1 This opinion is adopted by Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār; see his *Tanzīh al-Qurʾān ʿan al-maṭāʿin,* 460.

OPINION: God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He who purifies himself from disbelief in and disobedience of God, acts in accordance with what God has commanded him to do, and fulfils his religious obligations, will succeed and attain what he has sought.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ali [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—Alī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *He is successful who tazakkā,* "Purifies his soul from associating any partners with God."

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī—Hishām—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *He is successful who tazakkā,* "He whose deeds are pure."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *He is successful who tazakkā,* "With deeds and watchfulness".[1]

Q. 87:14

Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam—Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar al-ʿAdanī—Ḥakam—Ikrima said, concerning His statement *He is successful who tazakkā,* "Whoever says, 'There is no god but God.'"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Whoever pays the *zakāt* on his wealth is successful.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAlī b. al-Aqmar—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ said, concerning *He is successful who tazakkā,* "Whoever is able to make a small gift (*yardakha*) should do so; subsequently, he should rise and pray."

Muḥammad b. ʿUmāra al-Rāzī—Abū Nuʿaym—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Alī b. al-Aqmar—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ said, concerning *He is successful who tazakkā,* "Whoever makes a small gift."

Muḥammad b. ʿUmāra—ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd b. Murra—Zuhayr—Abū Isḥāq—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ said, "If a beggar comes to any of you while you are on the way to pray [in the mosque], he should give his *zakāt* prior to his prayer, since truly God says *He is successful who purifies himself, and remembers the Name of his Lord, and so prays.* Whoever is able to give *zakāt* prior to his prayer should do so."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *He is successful who tazakkā,* "A man who gives alms from his wealth and pleases His Creator."

1 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *bi-ʿamalin wa-waraʿ*; 24:319 (note 3).

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is the *zakāt* due on the occasion of ʿĪd al-Fiṭr.[1]

An account of those who said that:

ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Āmulī—Marwān b. Muʿāwiya—Abū Khalda, "I entered [the house] of Abū'l-ʿĀliya and he said to me, 'When you set off tomorrow morning for the ʿĪd prayer, pass by [my house].' [The next day,] I passed by his house and he said, 'Did you have any food?' I replied yes. Then he said, 'Did you pour any water over yourself?' I said yes. He said, 'Tell me about the *zakāt* you have given.' I said, 'I have given it.' [Abū'l-ʿĀliya] said, 'This is what I wanted [to know] from you.' Then he recited, *He is successful who purifies himself, and remembers the Name of his Lord, and so prays*. He said, 'The Medinans do not consider any alms (*ṣadaqa*) superior to the [ʿĪd al-Fiṭr] alms and [alms for the purpose of wells] to provide water.'"

Q. 87:15

INTERPRETATION OF *And remembers the Name of his Lord, and so prays*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of His statement *And remembers the Name of his Lord, and so prays*.

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: He affirms the oneness of God.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And remembers the Name of his Lord, and so prays*, "He affirms the oneness of God, glorified is He."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: He remembers God, calls out to Him and humbly asks of Him.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is to say: He remembers God, affirms His oneness, calls out to Him and humbly asks of Him, because all of this is part of "the remembrance of God". God did not specify [in this verse] one type of remembrance to the exclusion of another type.

The interpreters also disagreed over the interpretation of *and so prays* (*fa-ṣallā*).

[1] ʿĪd al-Fiṭr is the Muslim holiday that begins after the last day of Ramaḍān, the month of the Islamic calendar during which physically and mentally healthy Muslim adults are required to fast from daybreak until sunset. Muslims are required to pay alms on behalf of each household member prior to or on this day that is approximately equivalent to the price of a meal; this is called either *ṣadaqat al-fiṭr* or *zakāt al-fiṭr*.

OPINION: Some of them said: What is meant by that is: "*and so prays* the five [obligatory daily] prayers."

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *and so prays*, "He prays the five daily prayers."

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that is the ʿĪd prayer on ʿĪd al-Fiṭr.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is: *He remembers the Name of his Lord* and supplicates. The meaning of "prayer" here is "supplication (*duʿā'*)."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is to say: What is meant by His statement *fa-ṣallā* are the prayers and the invocation of God in them, by means of praise, glorification and supplication.

Q. 87:16-17

INTERPRETATION OF *But you prefer the life of the world*

He says to humanity: O humanity, *But you prefer the* adornments of the *life of the world* over the Hereafter, *although the Hereafter is better* for you *and more lasting*. He says: O humanity, the adornments of *the Hereafter* are *better* for you and its duration is *more lasting*, because the temporal world will vanish, while the Hereafter will remain, neither ceasing nor vanishing.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuraʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *But you prefer the life of the world*, "Humanity has chosen the fleeting now, except for those whom God has protected. As for His statement *The Hereafter is better*, [it is so] in terms of goods, *and more lasting*, in terms of duration."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—Abū Ḥamza—ʿAṭā'—ʿArfaja al-Thaqafī said, "I asked Ibn Masʿūd to recite to me [the *sūra* beginning with] *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High* and, when he reached *But you prefer the life of the world*, he stopped reciting and faced his companions, saying, 'We have preferred the temporal world over the Hereafter! Everyone fell silent. Then he said, 'We prefer the temporal world because we see its ornaments, its women, its food and its drink, while the Hereafter is concealed from us. So, we choose this fleeting now and abandon the permanent later.'"

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *But you prefer the life*

of the world. All of the reciters of the garrison cities read *bal tu'thirūna* with a *tā'* (in the second person plural), except for Abū ʿAmr, who read it with a *yā'* (in the third person plural), with the meaning of "the wretched folks [*prefer the life of the world*]."[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The reading for which I grant no greater preference is with a *tā'* on account of the consensus of the Qur'ān reciters upon it. It has also been alleged that the [irregular] reading of Ubayy was *bal antum tu'thirūn*, which is also an indicator that the correct reading is with a *tā'*.[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! this is in the former Scrolls*

The interpreters disagreed over the object to which *This* (*hādhā*) refers.

OPINION: Some of them said: That which is indicated by *This* are the verses that are in [the *sūra* beginning with] *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High*.

An account of those who said that:

Q. 87:18 Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—his father—ʿIkrima said, concerning *Lo! this is in the former Scrolls; the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses*, "The verses that are in [the *sūra* beginning with] *Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High*."

OPINION: Others said: [*This* indicates] the content (*qiṣṣah*) of this *sūra*.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Jaʿfar—Rabīʿ—Abū'l-ʿĀliya said, concerning *Lo! this is in the former Scrolls; the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses*, "The content of this *sūra* is *in the former Scrolls*."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *Lo! this*, which God has decreed[3] in this *sūra is in the former Scrolls*.

An account of those who said that:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lo! this is in the former Scrolls*, "*Lo! this*, which God has decreed in this *sūra*, *is in the former Scrolls; the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses*."

1 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes the reading of yu'*thirūn* to Abū ʿAmr, Ibn Masʿūd, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Rajāʾ and Jahdarī; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:470.

2 Ubayy's irregular reading makes explicit the second person plural pronoun (*antum*), which eliminates the possibility of the third person *yu'thirūn* preferred by Abū ʿAmr. Ubayy's reading of this verse is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:257.

3 Following the Dār Ḥajar emendation of *qaḍā* instead of the manuscript and Ḥalabī reading of *qaṣṣa*; 24:324 (note 2).

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is the statement, *the Hereafter is better for you and more lasting*, is *in the former Scrolls*.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lo! this is in the former Scrolls*, "The Books of God come one after another, as you have heard, [each one saying] *the Hereafter is better and more lasting*."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Lo! this is in the former Scrolls; the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses*, "[This is] in the Scrolls that God sent down to Abraham and Moses—that the Hereafter is better than the first [life]."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is for one to say: Truly His statement, *He is successful who purifies himself, and remembers the Name of his Lord, and so prays, But you prefer the life of the world, although the Hereafter is better and more lasting*, is *in the former Scrolls, the Scrolls of Abraham*, The All-Merciful's Friend, *and* the Scrolls of *Moses* Q. 87:19 the son of ʿImrān.

I only said that this is the more sound opinion than the other ones because the word *hādhā* (*This*) indicates something which is present and in its proximity, and this is better than understanding it as an indicator of something else [that is remote].

As for *suḥuf* ("Scrolls"), it is the plural of *ṣaḥīfa*. The intended meaning of *Scrolls* is the Books of Abraham and Moses.

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—Abū'l-Jald said, "The Scrolls of Abraham came down on the first night of Ramaḍān, the Torah was sent down six nights prior to the end of Ramaḍān, the Psalms were sent down on the twelfth night [of Ramaḍān], the Gospel was sent down on the eighteenth night, and the *Furqān* was sent down on the twenty-fourth night."

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Aʿlā

THE SUN
SŪRAT AL-SHAMS
(Q. 91:1–15)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[91:1] *By the sun and her brightness,* [91:2] *And the moon when it follows her,* [91:3] *And the day when it reveals her,* [91:4] *And the night when it enshrouds her,* [91:5] *And the heaven and the One Who built her,* [91:6] *And the earth and the One Who spread her,* [91:7] *And a soul and the One Who balanced her,* [91:8] *And inspired in her [knowledge of] her wickedness and her piety.*[1]

God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He), *By the sun and her brightness,* is an oath by which our Lord (Majestic is His praise) swore. The meaning of this passage is: I swear *by the sun* and *by the brightness* of the sun.

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *and her brightness.*

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: "By the sun and the daytime". He would say: The *duḥā* is the entire period of daylight.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *By the sun and her duḥā,* "This is the daytime."

OPINION: Others said: The meaning of that is: "By her brightness".

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid

1 I am taking a cue from Michael Sells and translating the rhyming *hā* at the end of the first ten verses of this *sūra* as "her" instead of the more idiomatic English pronoun "its": see his essay "A Literary Approach to the Hymnic Sūras of the Qurʾān: Spirit, Gender and Aural Intertextuality", in *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurʾān,* ed. Issa Boullata (2000), 3–35. It is beyond my capacity to do the same elsewhere in this work, where I have reverted to using "it" in reference to "the soul".

said, concerning God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) *By the sun and her duḥā,* "Her brightness".

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding this is to say: God (Majestic is His praise) swore by the sun and her daytime, because the sun's visible brightness is [during] the daytime.

INTERPRETATION OF *And the moon when it follows her*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And the moon when it* follows the sun, which occurs during the first half of the month, when the moon rises immediately following the setting of the sun.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that.[1] An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And the moon when it follows her,* "It follows the daytime."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—ʿAbd al-Malik—Qays b. Saʿd—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And the moon when it follows her,* "Meaning when the moon follows the sun."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *And the moon when it talā it,* "Follows it".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the moon when it follows her,* "The earliest part of the new crescent moon follows it. When the sun sets, the crescent moon becomes visible."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *And the moon when it follows her,* "When it follows the night of the new crescent moon."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement (Exalted is His remembrance) *By the sun and her brightness, and the moon when it follows her,* "This is an oath. The moon follows the sun during the first half of the month, and the sun follows the moon during the second half of the month. As for the first half of the month, the moon follows the sun; the sun is in front of it and the moon is behind it. During the second half of the month, the moon is in front of the sun and ahead

Q. 91:2

1 This line is absent from the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* and was inserted by the editors of the Dār Hajar edition; 24:435 (note 2).

of it, while the sun follows it.[1] *And the day when it reveals her*: The [day] precedes the [sun], and the [sun] follows it."

INTERPRETATION OF *And the day when it reveals her*

He says:[2] "*And the day when it jallā* the sun with its brightness," as we have been informed by:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *And the day when it jallā her*, "When it illuminates [her]."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the day when it reveals her*, "When the daytime covers it [with her brightness]."

One of the experts in the Arabic language[3] interpreted this verse as meaning: "*And the day when it reveals* the darkness," and he makes the suffix pronoun *hā* ("her") affixed to *jallā* as an allusion to "darkness". He says that it is possible for there to be an allusion to something which has not been previously mentioned because the meaning [in this case] is understood. This is like the statements "[The morning] became cold (*aṣbaḥat bārida*)"[4] or "[The evening] became cold (*amsat bārida*)" or "It [the winds] blew from the north (*habbat shimālan*)." They all allude to feminine things that have not been mentioned previously in the context, when their intended meanings are obvious.

Q. 91:3-4

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that, in my estimation, is that of the scholars (among the people of transmitted knowledge), whose opinion we have quoted, because they are more knowledgeable of [the correct interpretation], even though the opinion of the expert in the Arabic language that we have mentioned has merit.

INTERPRETATION OF *And the night when it enshrouds her*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "*And the night when it enshrouds*

1 In this report, the words "sun" and "moon" are represented almost exclusively by the female and male pronouns; in the interest of readability, I have not bracketed each substitution of "sun" for "her" and "moon" for "him".

2 The following sentence and report are missing from earlier editions of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 24:436.

3 This is al-Farrāʾ; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:266.

4 Literally, "She became cold in the morning." The implied word is "morning (*ṣubḥa*)", which is feminine.

the sun to the point where it conceals it and darkens the horizons." This is what Qatāda said in the narration from:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the night when it enshrouds her*, "When the night completely covers her."

INTERPRETATION OF *And the heaven and the One Who built her*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: *And the heaven and* He *Who built her*, meaning: "He who created her." The building of her is [God's] act of making the heaven as a roof for the earth.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the heaven and the One Who built her*, "His building her is His creation of her."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And the heaven and the One Who built her*, "God built the heaven."

Q. 91:5-6

It has been alleged that *wa-mā banānā* means: "He (Majestic is His praise) is her Builder." He assigned the [generally impersonal pronoun] *mā* ("that") the meaning of [the personal pronoun] *man* ("Who"), just as in the verse *And the begetter and the one whom* (*mā*) *he begat* (Q.90:3).[1] The meaning here of *mā walada* is "the one whom he begat" [instead of "that which he begat"], because this is part of an oath by which God swore by Adam and his son. This is also the case of His statement, *And marry not those women whom your fathers married* (*mā nakaḥa ābāʾukum min al-nisāʾ*; Q.4:22) and *marry* [*of the women*], *who seem good* (*mā ṭāba*) *to you* (Q.4:3). The meaning of this second verse is *marry* her, the one *who seems good to you*.[2] It is also possible to understand *mā* as an allusion to the verbal nouns in these verses, as if one were to say, "The heaven and her construction" or "The begetter and his begetting".

INTERPRETATION OF *And the earth and the One Who spread her*

This is equivalent to the preceding verse, and its meaning is: *And the earth and* He (*man*) *who spread her*.

1 This is Ṭabarī's explanation of Abū ʿUbayda's opinion; see *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:300.

2 Arabic: *faʾnkiḥū* man *ṭāba lakum*.

The meaning of *taḥāhā* is, "He Who spreads it out to the right and to the left and from every side."[1]

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *taḥāhā*.

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: And the earth and that which He created in her.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And the earth and mā taḥāhā*, "And that which He created in her."

OPINION: Others said: The meaning of that is: *And the earth and the One Who spread her*.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿUmāra—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Mūsā[2]—Ismāʿīl—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, concerning His statement *And the earth and mā taḥāhā*, "He spread it."

Q. 91:7

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Muḥammad]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And the earth and mā taḥāhā*, "He extended it."[3]

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And mā taḥāhā*, "He spreads it."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: And He Who divided [the earth] up.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And the earth and mā taḥāhā*, "He divided it up."

INTERPRETATION OF *And a soul and the One Who balanced her*

With His statement, *And a soul and* mā *balanced her*, God (Majestic is His praise) means Himself, because He is the One Who balanced the souls, created them and made their created forms proportional. The pronoun

1 This is Abū ʿUbayda's definition; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:300.

2 The Dār Hajar edition restores a significant lacuna in this report and the following one; see 24:439 (note 3).

3 It is interesting that Mujāhid glosses the *hapax legomenon taḥā* with another *hapax legomenon*, *daḥā*, found in Q.79:30.

mā ("that") is made to mean *man* ("He Who") in this context, although it could also carry the meaning of the verbal noun, in which case the interpretation would be: "And a soul and her balancing". In this case, the oath [by which God swore] would be: "By the soul and her balancing".

INTERPRETATION OF *And inspired in her (knowledge of) her wickedness and her piety*

OPINION: God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: He clarified for [the soul] what she should embrace and what she should shun, among good or evil [things], and among [the acts] of obedience or [acts of] disobedience.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ali [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *fa-alhamahā her wickedness and her piety*, "[God] clarified [what] is good and evil."

Q. 91:8

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *fa-alhamahā her wickedness and her piety*, "[God] taught her [acts of] obedience and [acts of] disobedience."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *fa-alhamahā her wickedness and her piety*, "He informed her."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *fa-alhamahā her wickedness and her piety*, "He clarified for [the soul] *her wickedness and her piety*."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *fa-alhamahā her wickedness and her piety*, "He clarified for her [the acts of] obedience and disobedience."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *fa-alhamahā her wickedness and her piety*, "[God] informed [the soul] of [the acts] of disobedience and of obedience."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim said, concerning *And inspired in her* [*knowledge of*] *her wickedness and her piety*, "[The knowledge of acts of] obedience and disobedience."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that God (Mighty and Majestic is He) created (*jaʿala*) that in [the soul].

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *fa-alhamahā her wickedness and her piety*, "[God] created in [the soul] her wickedness and her piety."

Ibn Bashshār—Ṣafwān b. ʿĪsā and Abū ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl—ʿAzra b. Thābit—Yaḥyā b. ʿUqayl—Yaḥyā b. Yaʿmar—Abū'l-Aswad al-Dīlī said, "ʿImrān b. Ḥuṣayn said to me, 'Do you see what the people do and to what ends they labour? Is it something that has been decreed for them and has it been determined prior to what they do or is it something they come forward with [on their own] from what their Prophet (ṣ) brought them and which the proof confirms for them?' I said, 'No, it is something that has been decreed for them.' ['Imrān] said, 'Then can that be oppressive or unjust?'" [Abu'l-Aswad] said: I grew extremely angry and said to him, "There is nothing that is neither His creation nor His possession; *He is not asked about what He does—rather, they will be asked* (Q.21:23)!" ['Imrān] said, "May God direct you aright! I only asked you (Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī said: I think he said)[1] so I could inform you[2] of a man from [the tribe of] Muzayna or Juhayna who came to the Prophet (ṣ), saying, 'O Messenger of God, do you see what the people do and how they labour? Is it something that has been decreed for them and has been determined prior to what they do or is it something which they come forward with [on their own], from what their Prophet has brought them, and which the proof confirms for them?' [The Prophet] replied, 'It is something that has been decreed for them.' The man replied, 'So what is the point of acting?'[3] [The Prophet] said, 'He whom God has created for one of the two final destinations will assume the qualities (*yuhayyiʾu*) of the people of [that destination].' The verification of this is in the Book of God: *And a soul and the One Who balanced her, and inspired in her [knowledge of] her wickedness and her piety*.'[4]

Q. 91:8

1 Following the Dār Hajar edition; 24:442 (note 3).
2 Literally, "your mind (*ʿaqlaka*)".
3 Literally, "So for the sake of what do we act (*fa-fima naʿmalu*)?"
4 Suyūṭī ascribes a shorter version of this *ḥadīth* to Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, and the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:600.

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[91:9] He is indeed successful who purifies her, [91:10] And he is indeed a failure who corrupts her. [91:11] [The tribe of] Thamūd denied [the truth] in their rebellious pride, [91:12] When the most wretched of them was sent forth [91:13] And the Messenger of God said, It is the she-camel of God, so let her drink! [91:14] But they denied him, then hamstrung her, so God doomed them for their sin and razed [them], [91:15] And He dreads not its consequences.

God says: *He* whose soul God grows[1] and increases, by purifying it from disbelief and acts of disobedience, and restores it [to purity], by righteous deeds, *is indeed successful*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *He is indeed successful who zakkā her*, "*He* whose soul God *purifies is indeed successful*."

Q. 91:9

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Khaṣīf—Mujāhid, Saʿīd b. Jubayr and ʿIkrima all said, concerning *He is indeed successful who zakkā her*, "He who restores (*aṣlaḥa*) her [to purity]."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid and Saʿīd b. Jubayr, without the mention of ʿIkrima.

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *He is indeed successful who zakkā her*, "Whoever performs a good deed purifies [his soul] by being obedient to God."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *He is indeed successful who zakkā her*, "*He who purifies* his soul by a righteous deed *is indeed successful*."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning *He is indeed successful who zakkā her*, "*He whose soul* God purifies *is indeed successful*."

This verse is the location of the complement of the oath [with which this *sūra* opens], as has been narrated to us from:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "The complement of the oath is right here at *He is indeed successful who purifies her*."

1 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *nammā* instead of *zakkā*; 24:443. This entire passage is inconsistent in the different manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, as the Dār Hajar editors point out, 24:443.

ṬABARĪ SAID: I have already mentioned what the experts in the Arabic language say about this [construction] in the preceding equivalent passages.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *And he is indeed a failure who corrupts her*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "He who *dassā* [his soul] *is indeed a failure* concerning his request and does not acquire the goodness which he has sought and requested for himself." He who *dassā* means: "He whose soul into which God thrusts (*dassasa*), reduces to obscurity[2] and abases, by refraining from showing it the true guidance, to the point that he commits acts of disobedience and forsakes acts of obedience to God."

It has been alleged that *dassāhā* is identical to *dassasahā*, such that one of the *sīn*s (of *dassasa*) has been converted into a *yā'*, like what the poet al-ʿAjjāj said:[3]

taqaddiya'l-bāzī idhā'l-bāzī kasar

Q. 91:10 When the falcon tucked in its wings, the falcon darted down.[4]

His intention for *taqaddiya* is *taqaddud*.[5] Likewise, the expression "*tazannaytu* on this topic" means: "I formed an opinion (*tazannantu*)."[6] The Arabs often do this, substituting a letter *yā'* or a letter *wāw* for a final consonant when it is preceded by the identical letter with a *shadda* on it. Another example of this is this [verse of *rajaz*],

yadhhabu bi fi'l-shi'ri kulla fanni
hattā yarudda ʿanni'l-tazannī

He channels through me every poetic art
So that all doubts about me are dispelled.[7]

The poet means *tazannun* [instead of *tazannī*].

1 See Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.38:1 (not included in this translation). For more on the "oath (*qasam*)", see Wright, 2:175.
2 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *akhmalahā* instead of *ahmalahā* in the Ḥalabī edition; 24:444.
3 The gist of this explanation, with copious examples, is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:266. This verse is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:300.
4 For this meaning of *kasar*, see Lane, "*k-s-r*".
5 Ṭabarī appears not to approve the literal meaning of the verb *dassā* ("to seduce, corrupt") in this context and so argues that *dassā* here does not derive from the root *d-s-w* but rather is Form V of *d-s-s*, which means "to conceal, thrust, put inside". He then shows that it is normal to substitute a *yā'* or *wāw* for the final radical of a Form V verb when the second and third radicals are the same letter.
6 Both *tazannana* and *tazannaya* are listed as Form V verbs of the root *z-n-n* in Hava, 447.
7 I am grateful for Khalid Williams' assistance with these lines of *rajaz*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And he is indeed a failure who dassā her*, "*He* whose soul God corrupts *is indeed a failure*, and He leads him astray."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*And he is indeed a failure who dassā her,* meaning [the soul's] denial."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid and Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, concerning *And he is indeed a failure who dassā her*, "One of them said, 'He leads her[1] awry (*aghwāhā*),' and the other one said, 'He leads her astray (*adallahā*).'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid said, concerning *And he is indeed a failure who dassā her*, "He who leads her astray," while Saʿīd [b. Jubayr] said, "He who leads her awry."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *who dassā her*, "He leads her awry."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And he is indeed a failure who dassā her*, "He makes her sin and corrupts her."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from [Muḥammad] ibn Abd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda.

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And he is indeed a failure who corrupts her*, "*And he is indeed a failure* whose soul God *corrupts*."

INTERPRETATION OF *Thamūd denied in their rebellious pride*

OPINION: He says: Thamūd denied their *ṭughyān*, meaning their punishment [which the Prophet] Ṣāliḥ promised them. This punishment exceeded all measure and raged against them, as God (Majestic is His praise) said, *As for Thamūd, they were destroyed by the thunderbolt* (*ṭāghiya*; Q.69:5).

Q. 91:11

1 Recall that the object pronoun "her" refers to the human soul throughout this section.

A group of interpreters[1] said something similar to what we have just said concerning that, even though there is a disagreement among the interpreters [over its meaning]. An account of those who said what we said concerning that:

Saʿīd b. ʿAmr al-Sakūnī—al-Walīd b. Salama al-Filasṭīnī—Yazīd b. Samura al-Madhḥijī—ʿAṭāʾ al-Khurāsānī—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning God's statement (Mighty and Majestic is He) *Thamūd denied bi-ṭaghwāhā*, "The name of the punishment that befell them was Ṭaghwā, so [God] said: Thamūd denied their punishment."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*Thamūd denied their ṭaghwā*, meaning 'the raging [punishment]'."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Thamūd denied their disobedience of God.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Thamūd denied bi-ṭaghwāhā*, "Their disobedience [of God]".

Q. 91:11

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Thamūd denied bi-ṭaghwāhā*, "Their rebellious pride and their disobedience."

OPINION: Others said, Rather, the meaning of that is: [Thamūd denied] it altogether.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Yaḥyā b. Ayyūb and Ibn Lahīʿa—ʿUmāra b. Ghaziyya—Muḥammad b. Rifāʿa al-Qurazī—Muḥammad b. Kaʿb said, concerning *Thamūd denied bi-ṭaghwāhā*, "It altogether."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Barqī—Ibn Abī Maryam—Yaḥyā b. Ayyūb—ʿUmāra b. Ghaziyya—Muḥammad b. Rifāʿa al-Qurazī—Muḥammad b. Kaʿb.

It has been alleged that *ṭaghwāhā* means: "their rebellious pride (*ṭughyānihā*)". Both words are verbal nouns, as is supported by the previous Qurʾānic verses, since [the form] *ṭaghwā* is more similar to the preceding verses of this *sūra*.[2] This is equivalent to the case of His statement, *And*

1 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, 24:446.

2 In other words, Ṭabarī (quoting al-Farrāʾ) is saying that *ṭughyān*, the more common verbal noun form, does not fit the rhyme scheme of this *sūra*, which is *-āhā*.

the conclusion of their prayer (Q.10:10), [in which the word daʿwāhum (*their prayer*)] means *And the conclusion of* duʿāʾihim.[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *When the most wretched of them was sent forth*

He says: "*When the most wretched* of the Thamūd people rose up, which is Qudār b. Sālif," as has been narrated to us by:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Tufāwī—Hishām [b. ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr]—his father—Abd Allāh b. Zamaʿa said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) was delivering a sermon in which he mentioned the she-camel and the person who hamstrung it when he said, '*When the most wretched of them was sent forth*, meaning a powerful, violent, strong man from his people was sent forth to [the she-camel], like Abū Zamaʿa.'"[2]

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *When the most wretched of them was sent forth*, "The ruddy man (*uhaymir*) of Thamūd."

Q. 91:12–15

INTERPRETATION OF *And the Messenger of God said, It is the she-camel of God, so let her drink!*

God (Majestic is His praise) is referring to His Messenger Ṣāliḥ (ṣ). Ṣāliḥ said to Thamūd: "*It is the she-camel of God, so let her drink!* Beware of the she-camel of God and her drinking!" He warned them of the drinking she-camel because he had already told them about God's command that the she-camel had a right to drink [from the watering hole] one day and they had the right to use it another day, one which had not been designated for the she-camel, as we have already explained previously,[3] and has been narrated to us from:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the Messenger of God said, It is the she-camel of God, so let her drink!*, "The times which God allotted for this she-camel [to drink] from this water."

1 Contrast the smooth rhythmic flow of *wa-ākhiru daʿwāhum* with the choppy *wa-ākhiru daʿāʾihim*. This paragraph is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:267.

2 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is also found in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Bukhārī and Muslim; the *Sunans* of Tirmidhī and Nasāʾī; the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; the *Sunan* of Saʿīd b. Manṣūr; and the Qurʾānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:602.

3 The story of Thamūd and the she-camel is told in many passages of the Qurʾān. The editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* refer readers to his commentary on Q.7:73 for additional details regarding this episode (not included in this translation).

INTERPRETATION OF *But they rejected him, then hamstrung her*

He says: "*But they rejected* Ṣāliḥ and the report, by which he informed them of God's designation of one day for the she-camel to drink, and another specific day for them to drink, as well as God's right to cast vengeance upon them, were they to hamstring this she-camel," as He (Majestic is His praise) has described: *Thamūd and ʿĀd rejected the Clatterer* (Q.69:4).

It is possible that this verse refers to their rejection of [the prohibition against] hamstringing [the she-camel]. If that is how it is, then it is acceptable for the rejection to precede the hamstringing or for the hamstringing to be prior to the rejection. This is because every action which occasions an outcome can be articulated both prior to the outcome and anterior to it, as one can say, "I gave and did a good deed" or "I did a good deed and gave."[1] In this case, the act of giving is the act of doing a good deed, while the act doing a good deed is the act of giving. Likewise, if the hamstringing is the outcome of their rejection, the speaker can articulate either of the actions—hamstringing or rejecting—prior to the other.

Q. 91:14

One of them[2] said that His statement *But they rejected him* is an independent sentence, and that *then hamstrung her* is the rejoinder to *When the most wretched of them was sent forth*. It is as if it were said, "*When the most wretched of them was sent forth* and he hamstrung her." If someone were to declare problematic the meaning of His statement,[3] *But they rejected him, then hamstrung her* and say, "How can it be said, *But they rejected him, then hamstrung her*, when there was a group [of Thamūd] who acted in accordance [with God's command] prior to killing the she-camel, for they allotted it one day to drink and designated a different day for themselves to drink?" [We would respond:] A report has come that after their acceptance of this [schedule], they came to a consensus to prohibit the she-camel from drinking and sanctioned killing her. It was on account of their universal acceptance of this that the killer killed and hamstrung [the she-camel]. This is why the [acts of] rejecting and hamstringing are affixed to the entire group [instead of to *the most wretched one* who *was sent forth*], as He (Majestic is His praise) said, *But they rejected him, then hamstrung her*.

1 In other words, Ṭabarī says the word order does not matter in the case of *aʾtaytu fa-aḥsantu* and *aḥsantu fa-aʾtaytu*. This example and parts of his explanation are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:269.

2 This is also the opinion of al-Farrāʾ; ibid.

3 This sentence up to this point is missing in earlier editions and most manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 24:450.

INTERPRETATION OF *so God doomed them for their sin and razed (them)*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "Their Lord destroyed them *and razed* them, on account of their disbelief in Him, their rejection of His Messenger Ṣāliḥ and their act of hamstringing his she-camel." He says: "The destruction razed them altogether and not a single one of them escaped," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *so God doomed them for their sin and razed (them)*, "It has been mentioned to us that the ruddy man of Thamūd refused to hamstring her until the young and old, male and female [of his tribe] followed him.[1] When all of the people became complicit in hamstringing her, God *doomed them for their sin and razed* it."

Bishr b. Ādam—Abū Qutayba—Abū Hilāl said, "I heard al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] say, 'When they hamstrung the she-camel, they sought its weaned child and it fled to a knoll in the mountain. Then God cut [out] their hearts.'"

Q. 91:15

INTERPERTATION OF *And He dreads not its consequences*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of that.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its meaning is: [God] does not fear the consequence of His destruction of them.

An account of those who said that:

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And He dreads not its consequences*, "God does not fear any consequence from a single one of them."

Ibrāhīm b. al-Mustamirr—ʿUthmān b. ʿUmar—ʿUmar b. Mazīd—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *And He dreads not its consequences*, "That is our Lord (Blessed and Exalted is He). He does not fear any consequence for what He did to them."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—ʿUmar b. Munabbih (That is what is written in my book) said, "I heard al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] recite *And He dreads not its consequences* and say, 'That is the Lord, Who did this to them without fearing any consequence [of His act].'"

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī]

1 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *tābaʿahu* instead of the Ḥalabī *bāyaʿahu* ("They swore allegiance"); 24:450. The latter reading might make better sense in this context, and is found in most of the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

said, concerning His statement *And He dreads not its consequences*, "He does not fear their consequence."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And He dreads not its consequences*, "He does not fear any consequences that might follow what He has done to them."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—[ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And He dreads not its consequences*: Muḥammad [b. ʿAmr] said in his narration [that Mujāhid] said, "God *dreads not its consequences*." Hārith [b. Abī Usāma] said in his narration [that Mujāhid] said, "God *dreads not its consequences*."[1]

Muḥammad b. Sinān—Yaʿqūb—Rizīn b. Sulaymān said, "I heard Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Muzanī say, concerning His statement *And He dreads not its consequences*, "God does not fear the consequence [of this act]."

Q. 91:15 OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: The man who hamstrung the she-camel did not fear its consequence, meaning the consequence of the act[2] he committed.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Jābir b. Nūḥ—Abū Rawq—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning *And he dreads not its consequences*, "The person who hamstrung the she-camel did not fear the consequence [of his act]."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Suddī said, concerning *And he dreads not its consequences*, "The one who [hamstrung the she-camel] does not fear the consequence of what he did."[3]

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of this verse. Most of the Hijazi and Syrian reciters read *fa-lā yakhāfu ʿuqbāhā* with a *fā'*, and this is how it is written in their copies of the Qur'ān. Most of the Iraqis of the two garrison cities (Kufa and Basra) read it with a *wāw*—*wa-lā yakhāfu ʿuqbāhā*—and this is how it is written in their copies of the Qur'ān.[4]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion is that both readings are well known and do not differ in meaning, so the reciter will be correct reading either one.

1 Presumably, the two narrations contained differences outside of these two identical passages.
2 Since the suffix pronoun of *its consequence* (*ʿuqbāhā*) is feminine singular, a feminine nominal form of "act" or "deed" (in this case *fa'la*) is required for this interpretation to work.
3 See Dār Hajar, 24:453 (note 1) for the discrepencies of the manuscripts of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* at this place. I have followed the Dār Hajar edition.
4 See the footnote above on Q 57:24, concerning the rare instances in which equally authentic readings differ in their consonantal orthography of the Qur'ānic text.

The Qur'ān reciters also disagreed over the practice of *imāla*[1] of the verbs whose final radical is a *wāw* in this *sūra* and elsewhere. Examples [in this *sūra*] include *And the moon when it* talā *her* and the verse *the One Who* tahā *it*. [The original roots of these verbs are *t-l-w* and *t-h-w*, respectively.] Most of the Kufan reciters, with the exceptions of ʿĀṣim and Kisā'ī, read these verbs with the "a" sound, but they read words whose original final radical is a *yā'* with *imāla*. ʿĀṣim reads both types of words with the "a" sound—both those whose original final radical was a *wāw* and those which ended with a *yā'*, and he does not take either one down at all. Kisā'ī read both types of word with an "ee" sound. Abū ʿAmr would look at the structure of the preceding verses and if they were all following a single pattern, he would read them all with *imāla*. Most of the Medinan reciters refrained from applying an intense *imāla* to anything and did not apply an intense "a" sound; instead, they chose an intermediary reading.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The most eloquent and beautiful reading is to look at the opening of the *sūra* [in question]. If the initial verses have [final radicals] of *yā'*, then one should read them all with an *imāla* that is not excessive. If the initial verses have [final radicals] of *wāw*, then one should read them with an "a" sound that is not excessive. If the word occurs in an isolated passage, then apply a moderate *imāla* to the words whose final radical is a *yā'* and apply a median "a" sound to those words whose final radical is a *wāw*. One does not commit an [act of] barbarism by reading *imāla* for [the second case] and an "a" sound for [the first case], except that the truly eloquent speech is as we have just described. Q. 91:15

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Shams

1 *Imāla* is when a final radical *yā'* becomes an *alif* and is read 50 percent *yā'* and 50 percent *alif*; see http://www.abouttajweed.com/warsh/lesson-nine.html.

THE NIGHT
SŪRAT AL-LAYL
(Q. 92:1–21)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[92:1] By the night when it enshrouds [92:2] And the day when it is resplendent [92:3] And Him Who has created male and female, [92:4] Lo! your efforts are manifold. [92:5] As for him who gives and is God-fearing [92:6] And affirms the Goodness, [92:7] Surely We will ease his way to the Ease. [92:8] But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency [92:9] And denies the Goodness, [92:10] Surely We will ease his way to the Adversity.

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says, swearing an oath by the night, when it covers the daytime with its darkness, eliminating its luminance, by the coming of its darkness: "*By the night when it enshrouds* the daytime *And the day when it is resplendent.*" This also is an oath. God swears by the day, when it is bright and luminous, and makes visible to the eyes all of the things which the darkness of the night had [rendered invisible] by inserting [itself] between them and the [creatures'] eyesight. Qatāda was of the opinion, concerning the objects by which God swears, that He only swears by them on account of their greatness in His estimation, as has been narrated to us by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *By the night when it enshrouds and the day when it is resplendent*, "These are two tremendous signs that God repeatedly mentions[1] to all creatures."

INTERPRETATION OF *And Him Who has created male and female*

The word *mā* can be understood in the two ways previously described in the preceding *sūra*, [in relation to] *And the heaven and the One Who built it;*

1 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *yukarriru* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *yukawwiru*; 24:455.

and the earth and the One Who spread her (Q.91:5–6). It can be taken to mean "he or him who (*man*)", in which case God (Majestic is His praise) swears by the creator of male and female—and He is that Creator—or the word *mā* and that which follows can be read as a verbal noun ("creating"), in which case it is an oath by His act of creating male and female. [In the second case, the translation of this verse would be *And His creating male and female.*]

It has been alleged that ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd and Abū'l-Dardā' would recite "And the male and the female"; and Abū'l-Dardā' attributed this reading to the Messenger of God (ṣ).

An account of the report of that:

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Abū Isḥāq said: ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd's] reading [of these verses] is, "*By the night when it enshrouds, and the day when it is resplendent*, and the male and the female."

Ibn al-Muthannā—Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik—Shuʿba—al-Mughīra—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, "'Alqama came to Damascus[1] and sat with Abū'l-Dardā', who said to him, 'From which people do you come?'" "I[2] said, 'From the Kufans.' He asked, 'How does ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] read these verses, *By the night when it enshrouds, and the day when it is resplendent*? I said, 'He reads "and the male and the female".' [Abū'l-Dardā'] said, 'These people[3] continued [pressuring me to change my reading to *And Him Who has created male and female*] until they nearly succeeded in misleading me. Nonetheless, I heard the Messenger of God (ṣ) recite it [the way Ibn Masʿūd read it].'"[4]

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Ḥātim b. Wardān—Abū Ḥamza—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—'Alqama said, "I came to Damascus and visited Abū'l-Dardā'. He asked me, 'How have you heard Ibn Masʿūd recite these

Q. 92:3

1 The word Shām can mean either Syria or Damascus; Abū'l-Dardā' served as a *qāḍī* in Damascus, which is where he died in either 31 or 32/651–3; Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ wa'l-lughāt*, 1:726–7.

2 Alqama b. Qays is speaking here in the first person. He was a close associate of Ibn Masʿūd.

3 This is probably a reference to the Syrian Muslims, although it could be an allusion to Caliph Uthmān's project to codify the written form of the Qurʾān, which was happening during the final years of Abū'l-Dardā''s life.

4 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is also found in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Bukhārī and Muslim; the *Sunans* of Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī; the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; the Qurʾānic commentaries of Abd b. al-Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; and the *Sunan* of Saʿīd b. Manṣūr; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:604. This is an interesting example of a "sound" *ḥadīth* contradicting the orthodox text of the Qurʾān.

verses: *By the night when it enshrouds, and the day when it is resplendent*?' I said, 'He reads "and the male and the female".' [Abū'l-Dardā'] said, 'That is how[1] I heard it from the Messenger of God (ṣ).'"

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Isḥāq b. Shāhīn—Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—ʿAlqama b. Qays said, "I came to Damascus and met Abū'l-Dardā', who said to me, 'Where are you from?' I said, 'From the people of Iraq.' He said, 'From which ones?' I replied, 'From the Kufans.' He said, 'Do you recite the reading of Ibn Umm ʿAbd?'[2] I said yes. He said, 'Recite *By the night when it enshrouds*,' and so I recited these verses: '*By the night when it enshrouds, and the day when it is resplendent* and the male and the female.' [Abū'l-Dardā'] chuckled, saying, 'This is how I heard it from the Messenger of God (ṣ).'"

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—ʿAlqama—Abū'l-Dardā'—the Prophet (ṣ).

Q. 92:3

Abū'l-Sā'ib—Abū Muʿāwiya—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—ʿAlqama said, "I came to Damascus and Abū'l-Dardā' came [to me] saying, 'Is there anyone among you who recites according to ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd]'s reading [of the Qur'ān]?' [My companions] pointed at me, and I said 'Me'. He said, 'How have you heard ʿAbd Allāh recite these verses: "*By the night when it enshrouds, and the day when it is resplendent* and the male and the female?"[3] This is how I heard the Messenger of God (ṣ) recite these verses, but these people want me to recite *And Him Who has created male and female* and I refuse to follow them.'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And Him Who has created male and female*, "In some (or one) of the readings (*baʿḍ al-ḥurūf*), this verse is 'and the male and the female'."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda.

Aḥmad b. Yūsuf—al-Qāsim—Ḥajjāj—Hārūn—Ismāʿīl—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] would recite *wa-mā khalaqa'l-dhakari*[4] *wa'l-unthā* and say, *And Him Who has created male and female*. Hārūn said that Abū ʿAmr said, "The

1 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *kadhāk* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *kafāk*; 24:457
2 Ibn Umm ʿAbd ("The son of the mother of ʿAbd [Allāh]") is one of the well-known nicknames of Ibn Masʿūd.
3 Following the correct reading found in the Dār Ḥajar edition; 24:458 (note 1).
4 Following the Dār Ḥajar edition, which provides evidence that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī read *dhakar* with a *kasra* under the *rāʾ* instead of a *fatḥa*; 24:458.

Meccans would say after a thunderclap, 'Glory to the One Whom (*mā*) you glorified.'"[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—al-Mughīra b. Miqsam al-Ḍabbī—Ibrāhīm b. Yazīd b. Abī ʿImrān al-Nakhaʿī (Abū ʿImrān) said,

> ʿAlqama b. Qays Abū Shibl came to Damascus, entered the mosque, and prayed in it. Then he rose and joined a teaching circle and said, "A man came to me and I noticed that the people kept a distance from him and had reverential fear towards him. He sat next to me and I said, 'All praise belongs to God! I hope that God will have answered my request by making this person be Abū'l-Dardā'!' He said, 'What is this?' ʿAlqama said, 'I called out to God to provide for me a righteous man with whom to sit, and I hope that he is you.' He said, 'From where do you come?' I said, 'From Kufa (or from the Iraqis of Kufa).' Abū'l-Dardā' said, 'Do you not have in your presence there the Companion of the two sandals, the pillow and the vessel for ablutions (meaning Ibn Masʿūd)? Do you not have amongst you the one who, by the tongue of the Prophet (ṣ), was protected from the accursed Satan (meaning ʿAmmār b. Yāsir)? Do you not have amongst you the Companion of the secret which nobody else knows[2] (meaning Ḥudhayfa b. Yamān)?' Then he said, 'Who among you has memorized the Qur'ān according to the way ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] recites?' I said, 'Me'. He said, 'Recite *By the night when it enshrouds, and the day when it is resplendent*.' ʿAlqama said: When I recited 'And the male and the female', Abū'l-Dardā' said, 'By the One Whom there is no deity save He! This is how the Messenger of God (ṣ) taught me to recite it, from his mouth to my mouth. These people continue trying to repel me from reading it this way.'"

Q. 92:3

1 Arabic: *subḥāna mā sabbaḥta lahu*. In other words, the sound of the thunderclap glorifies God, as the Qur'ān says: *The thunder glorifies His praise as do the angels for awe of Him* (Q. 13:13). The point of this statement is that the word *mā* has the meaning of "He whom (*man*)", as it does in *And Him Who* (*mā*) *has created male and female*.
2 The narrator of this report indicates his uncertainty whether the Arabic here is *lā yaʿlamuhu ghayruhu* or *lā yaʿlamuhu aḥadun ghayruhu*; the meanings are nearly identical, although the addition of *aḥadun* adds emphasis to the second one.

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! your efforts are manifold*

He says: "O humanity, truly your deeds differ, because from among you are those who disbelieve in their Lord and disobey His commands and His prohibitions, while others are believers in Him and obey His commands and His prohibitions," as we have been informed by:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lo! your efforts la-shattā*, "Differ".

His statement *Lo! your efforts are manifold* is the response to the oath [at the opening of the *sūra*].[1] The complete sentence is *By the night when it enshrouds, lo! your efforts are manifold*. This is what the scholars have said.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "The response to the oath [in this *sūra*] is *Lo! your efforts are manifold*."

Q. 92:4-5

INTERPRETATION OF *As for him who gives and is God-fearing*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *as for him who gives and is God-fearing* from among you in the path of God, and whom God commanded to give of his wealth and that which [God] has bestowed upon him from His bounty, and who is God-fearing and avoids anything He has made unlawful.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ḥumayd b. Masʿada—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—Dāwūd—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *As for him who gives and is God-fearing*, "He *gives* whatever he has and *ittaqā*: he fears His Lord."

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī—Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh—Dāwūd b. Abī Hind—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*As for him who gives* from his surplus *and fears*—he fears his Lord."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*As for him who gives* what is due to God *and ittaqā* that which God has made unlawful and has prohibited."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—Ubayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *As for him who gives and is God-fearing*, "He who gives alms (*zakkā*)[2] and fears God."

1 This is also the opinion of al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:270.

2 Following the Dār Ḥajar reading of *zakkā* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *dhakara'llāh*; 24:361.

INTERPRETATION OF *And affirms the Goodness*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of His statement Mighty and Majestic is He), *And affirms the Goodness* (*ḥusnā*).

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: *And affirms* the compensation (*khalaf*) from God, for his having given what he has given from his wealth, which God commanded him to give for His cause.

An account of those who said that:

Ḥumayd b. Masʿada—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—Dāwūd—ʿIkrima—Ibn Abbās said, concerning His statement *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "*And affirms* the compensation from God."

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿIkrima—Ibn Abbās said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "*And affirms* the compensation from God."

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī—Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh—Dāwūd b. Abī Hind—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "The compensation".

Q. 92:

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Dāwūd—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās.

Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā al-Suddī—Bishr b. al-Ḥakam al-Aḥmasī—Saʿīd b. al-Salt—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Ṣāliḥ—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "He is certain of the compensation."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Qays b. Muslim—ʿIkrima said, concerning *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms the ḥusnā*, "The compensation".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Qays b. Muslim—ʿIkrima said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "That God will compensate him in the future."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Hāshim al-Makkī—Mujāhid said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "The compensation".

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī—Shahr b. Ḥawshab—Ibn Abbās said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "The compensation".

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Naḍr b. ʿArabī—ʿIkrima said, "[He affirms] the compensation."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *He affirms* that God is One and devoid of any partners.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī al-Muqaddamī—Ashʿath al-Sijistānī—Misʿar; and from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Misʿar—Abū Ḥaṣīn—Abū ʿAbd

al-Raḥmān [al-Sulamī] said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "That there is no god but God."

Two additional nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Ḥaṣīn—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān; and from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abū Ḥaṣīn—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.

Marwazī—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "That there is no god but God."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "He affirms that there is no god but God."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: He affirms [the reality] of the Garden.

Q. 92:6

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "The Garden".

Two additional nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Muḥabbab—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid; and from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid.

OPINION: Others said: Rather, its meaning is: He affirms that which God has promised.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "He affirms that which God has promised him. Furthermore, he [gives of his wealth and fears God] because of that which God has promised him."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And affirms the ḥusnā*, "The believer affirms the beautiful things God has promised."

TABARĪ SAID: The opinion which most closely resembles the apparent meaning of the revelation and which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is that of he who says: What is meant by it is: "He affirms the compensation from God for his spending [in His cause]." I only said that this is the opinion that is most likely to be correct because God (Majestic is His praise) has mentioned, prior to this verse, the person who spends with the

goal of obtaining compensation for his spending. Therefore, the best meaning is for the following verse to refer to [the spender's] affirmation of God's promise of compensation for him, if his spending is done in the manner that is acceptable to Him. What we have said about this verse is also supported by the following report on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ).

An account of the report that has come to us [from the Prophet] regarding that:

Al-Ḥusayn b. Salama b. Abī Kabsha—al-Malik b. ʿAmr—ʿAbbād b. Rāshid—Qatāda—Khulayd al-ʿAṣarī—Abū'l-Dardā' said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Not a day passes except when, as the sun sets, two angels come on either side of it to call out [in a voice], which all of God's creation, save for humans and jinn, can hear, saying, 'O God, give the one who spends [in Your path] compensation (*khalafan*), and give the one who clings to his wealth destruction (*talafan*)!' Then God sent down the following Qurʾānic verses: *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms al-ḥusnā* through the verse ending with *to the Adversity*."[1]

Q. 92:7

It has been alleged that these verses came down regarding Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (r).

An account of the report concerning that:

Hārūn b. Idrīs al-Aṣamm—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Muḥāribī—Muḥammad b. Isḥāq—Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq—ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr said, "Abū Bakr would manumit elderly and female slaves who converted to Islam in Mecca. His father said to him, 'My boy, I see you are manumitting weak people. If only you were to free strong men who could support you, protect you and defend you!' [Abū Bakr] said, 'My dear father, I only wish for that which is with God.'"[2] [ʿĀmir] said, "Some of my family members (i.e. the Zubayrids) informed me that these verses were sent down regarding [Abū Bakr]: *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Ease*."

INTERPRETATION OF *Surely We will ease his way to the Ease*

He says: We endow him with the innate quality of ease (*khallat al-yusrā*), which is acting in accordance with what pleases God in the temporal world, in order to make him deserving of entry to the Garden in the Hereafter.

1 Suyūṭī does not mention this *ḥadīth* in this place in *al-Durr al-manthūr*; for a discussion of the other sources in which similar narrations are found, see Dār Hajar, 24:465.

2 The narrator inserts in the middle of this statement: "I think this is what he said."

INTERPRETATION OF *But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency*

God (Mighty and Majesty is He) says: *As for him who is stingy* in his spending in the path of God, who refuses to give any of the bounty that God has bestowed upon him or to spend it according to the ways God has commanded him to spend, and who claims self-sufficiency from His Lord—he will not pray to Him to increase his deeds of obedience to Him beyond those which He has already conferred upon him.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ḥumayd b. Mas'ada—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—Dāwūd—'Ikrima—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning His statement *But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency*, "He *is stingy* with what he has *and claims self-sufficiency* regarding himself."

Ibn al-Muthannā—'Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Khālid b. 'Abd Allāh—Dāwūd b. Abī Hind—'Ikrima—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency*, "*But as for him who is stingy* with the bounty or surplus [he has received] *and claims self-sufficiency* from His Lord." Q. 92:8-9

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-'Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency*, "He whom God enriches yet is stingy with his *zakāt*."

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency*, "*But as for him who is stingy* with God's claim upon him *and claims self-sufficiency* from His Lord regarding himself."

INTERPRETATION OF *And denies the Goodness*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of this verse in the same way that they disagreed over the meaning of His statement *And affirms the Goodness*.

OPINION: ṬABARĪ SAID: As for us, we say that its meaning is: "*And denies* the compensation," as we have narrated from:

Ḥumayd b. Mas'ada—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—Dāwūd—'Ikrima—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *And denies the ḥusnā*, "He denies the compensation."

Ibn al-Muthannā—'Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Khālid b. 'Abd Allāh—Dāwūd b. Abī Hind—'Ikrima—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *And denies the ḥusnā*, "The compensation from God."

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—

Qatāda said, concerning *And denies the ḥusnā*, "He denies that which God has promised, as God said, *Surely We will ease his way to the Adversity*."

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—Qatāda said, concerning *And denies the ḥusnā*, "The disbeliever denies the beautiful things God has promised."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, its meaning is: *And denies* the affirmation of God's Oneness.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Sa'd al-'Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *And denies the ḥusnā*, "He denies [the statement] 'There is no god but God.'"

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Mu'ādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—'Ubayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *And denies the ḥusnā*, "[He denies the statement] 'There is no god but God.'" Q. 92:10

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: *And denies* [the reality] of the Garden.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *And denies the ḥusnā*, "The Garden".

INTERPRETATION OF *Surely We will ease his way to the Adversity*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: "We will endow him in the temporal world with the innate quality of Adversity (*khallat al-'usrā*)." This comes from [the Arabs'] expression "The female sheep of so-and-so *yasrat*," when it is about to give birth and becomes physically prepared for the birthing [by storing much milk], as the poet said,[1]

humā sayyidānā yaz'umāni wa-innamā
yasūdāninā an yasrat ghanamāhumā

They two are our two chiefs, as they assert;
But they are only our chiefs inasmuch as their sheep abound in milk and offspring.[2]

It has been said: [God says] *Surely We will ease his way to the Adversity*, even

1 This sentence and the following verse of poetry are found in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:271.
2 This is the translation of this verse found in Lane's *Lexicon* under the entry "*y-s-r*". The poem is ascribed to Abū Usayda al-Dubayrī.

though there is no such thing as "easing *Adversity*"[1] in the same manner that was mentioned previously in the discussion of *We will ease* [their] *way to the Ease*. When we put these two sentences together, we find that one mentions the good and the other evil, and so it is permissible that the verb "to ease (*taysīr*)" can be applied to both types of acts. The *Adversity* which God (Majestic is His praise) informs us He will facilitate [for some people] is the performance of any act He finds reprehensible and unacceptable.

A report on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ) supports what we have just said concerning that.

An account of the report regarding that:

Wāṣil b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā and Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—al-Aʿmash—Saʿd b. ʿUbayda—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī—ʿAlī (r) said, "We were sitting with the Prophet (ṣ) when he made a mark in the ground, then raised his head, saying, 'There is not one of you save that it has already been written whether his abode will be the Garden or in Hellfire.' We said, 'O Messenger of God, should we not just rely upon God [and do nothing]?' He replied, 'No. You must act, for everyone [will act according to] what has been made easy [for him].' Then he recited, *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Ease. But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency, and denies the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Adversity*."[2]

Q. 92:10

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Zāʾida b. Qudāma—Manṣūr—Saʿd b. ʿUbayda—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī—ʿAlī said,

> We were at a funeral in the Baqīʿ cemetery [in Medina] when the Messenger of God (ṣ) came to us and sat. We sat with him. He had a stick in his hand, made a mark in the ground, and raised his head toward the sky, saying, "There is not one of you with a living soul[3] except that its place of entry [after death] has been already written."

1 Reading *taysīr* as it appears in al-Farrāʾ (3:271) instead of the printed *tayassur*. The objection that is being raised is that "easing" and "adversity" are antonyms, so the interlocutor is alleging that the concept of "easing adversity" is nonsensical; presumable one should say *ʿassara* ("to make more adverse") instead of *yassara*.

2 According to Suyūṭī, variations of this *hadith* are also found in the *Sahihs* of Bukhārī and Muslim; the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Nasāʾī and Ibn Māja; the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal; and the Qurʾānic commentaries of Abd b. Humayd and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:606. This *hadith* is central to the Sunni *Hadith*-scholars' solution to the difficult problem of free will and determinism, since it allows some agency for the individual to act in a certain manner that is influenced by the divine decree of his or her final abode but not directly controlled by it at the level of acts.

3 Literally, "a soul [into which the breath of life] has been breathed (*nafs manfūsa*)."

> The people said, "O Messenger of God, should we just rely upon what has been written for us, since he who is among the people of felicity, he will act in the manner of the felicitous, while he who is among the people of wretchedness will act in the manner of the wretched?" [The Prophet] said, "No; rather, you must act, for everyone [will act according to] what has been made easy [for him]. As for he who is among the people of felicity, he will be facilitated to act in the manner of the felicitious; as for he who is among the wretched, he will be facilitated to act in the manner of the wretched." Then he recited, *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Ease. But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency, and denies the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Adversity*.

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abūʾl-Sāʾib—Abū Muʿāwiya—al-Aʿmash—Saʿd b. ʿUbayda—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī—ʿAlī—the Prophet (ṣ).

Q. 92:10

Ibn al-Muthannā—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Manṣūr and al-Aʿmash—Saʿd b. ʿUbayda—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī—ʿAlī (r), "The Prophet (ṣ) was at a funeral when he took a stick and made a mark in the ground, saying, 'There is not one of you save that it has been written whether his abode will be in Hellfire or in the Garden.' They said, 'O Messenger of God, should we not just rely upon God [and do nothing]?' [The Prophet] said, 'Act, for everyone [will act according to] what has been made easy [for him].' [Then he recited], *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Ease. But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency, and denies the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Adversity*."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr and al-Aʿmash—Saʿd b. ʿUbayda—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī—ʿAlī (r) said, "We were sitting with the Prophet (ṣ), who picked up something from the ground in his hand, and said, 'There is not a single one of you save that He knows whether his abode will be in the Garden or Hellfire.' They said, 'O Prophet of God, should we not just rely upon God [and do nothing]?' He said, 'No; act, for everyone has been facilitated [to do] that which has been created for them.' Then he recited the verses beginning with *As for him who gives and is God-fearing*."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Abū Sinān—ʿAbd al-Malik b. Samura b. Abī Zayd—al-Nazzāl b. Sabra said: the Prophet (ṣ) said, "There is not a living soul save that God has written for it its final destination." [Al-Nazzāl said,] "A Bedouin in the Prophet's (ṣ) presence who was seeking herbage said, 'So what is the point [of effort], if I set off in this valley or that valley [looking for pasturage] and the outcome has already been determined?' The Prophet made a mark in the ground, in such a way that the people thought that he wanted nobody to talk about this topic at all, when he said, 'Everyone has been facilitated [to do] that which has been created for him. God facilitates the path of goodness for whomever He wishes goodness, and God facilitates the path of evil for whomever He wishes evil.'" [Al-Nazzāl] said, "I met up with ʿAmr b. Murra and presented this *ḥadīth* to him and he said: the Prophet (ṣ) said: [and he repeated this report] with the addition of: *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Ease. But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency, and denies the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Adversity.*"

Q. 92:10

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Ḥuṣayn—Saʿd b. ʿUbayda—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī said, "When the verse, *Lo! We have created every thing by measure* (Q.54:49), came down, a man said, 'O Messenger of God, for what purpose is action? Is it something we initiate or something that has already been settled?' The Messenger of God said, 'Act, for everyone has been facilitated [to do that which has been created for them]—*We will ease his way to the Ease* and *We will ease his way to the Adversity*.'"

ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Ṭāʾī—Muḥammad b. ʿUbayda—al-Jarrāḥ—Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd—al-Ḥajjāj b. Arṭāt—Abu Isḥāq al-Hamdānī—Sulaymān al-Aʿmash, who raised this report to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r), who said, "One day, while the Messenger of God (ṣ) was sitting and had a stick in his hand, with which he was making marks in the ground, he raised his head, saying, 'There is not one of you of all humanity save that his abode in the Garden or Hellfire is known [to God].' We said, 'O Messenger of God, should we just rely upon God [and do nothing]?' He said to them, 'Act, for everyone has been facilitated [to do] that which has been created for him.' Then he said, 'Have you all not heard God say in His Book, *As for him who gives and is God-fearing and affirms the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Ease. But as for him who is stingy and claims self-sufficiency, and denies the Goodness, surely We will ease his way to the Adversity*?'"

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī—Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh—Dāwūd b. Abī Hind—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning surely *We will ease his way to al-ʿusrā*, "To evil (or bad things), from God."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—ʿAmr b. al-Ḥārith—Abū'l-Zubayr—Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh said, "O Messenger of God, do we perform an act that has already been settled or do we initiate it ourselves?" He (ṣ) said, "Every actor is facilitated to act in the way he acts."[1]

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—ʿAmr b. Dīnār—Ṭalq b. Ḥabīb—Bashīr b. Kaʿb said, "Two young boys asked the Prophet (ṣ), saying, 'O Messenger of God, do we perform an act for which the pens [which record it] have been raised and the [outcomes] determined, or do we initiate it ourselves?' He replied, 'No, the pens have been raised and the [outcomes] determined.' They said, 'What then is the point of acting?' He said, 'Act, for every actor is facilitated to act in the way he acts, which has been created for him.' The boys said, 'Now we will exert ourselves and act.'"[2]

Q. 92:11

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[92:11] *His riches will not avail him when he falls.* [92:12] *Lo! to Us belongs the guidance* [92:13] *And lo! to Us belong the Hereafter and the former* [world]. [92:14] *Therefore have I warned you of a raging Fire* [92:15] *Which none will enter save the most wretched one,* [92:16] *Who denies and turns away.* [92:17] *Far removed from it will be the righteous* [92:18] *Who gives his wealth to purify himself.*

By saying *His riches will not avail him*, God (Majestic is His praise) means: From what can the wealth of this person, who was stingy with his wealth and claimed self-sufficiency from his Lord, defend on Resurrection Day, *when* he *falls*?

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *when he falls* (*taraddā*).

[1] According to Suyūṭī, a longer version of this *ḥadīth* is found in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān, the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Mardawayh's Qur'ānic commentary, and one of Ṭabarānī's books; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:607. He does not mention its presence in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

[2] According to Suyūṭī, a similar *ḥadīth* is only found in three biographical dictionaries of the Companions, two of which are no longer extant today: *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:607. His version of the *ḥadīth* has only a single questioner, rather than two boys, and he does not mention its presence in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

OPINION: Some of them said: Its interpretation is: *When he falls* into Gehenna, in other words, falls into it and dies.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ashjaʿī—[Ismāʿīl] b. Abī Khālid—Abū Ṣāliḥ said, "*His riches will not avail him when he falls* into Gehenna." Abū Kurayb said that Ashjaʿī heard this from Ismāʿīl.

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *when he falls*, "*When he falls* into Hellfire."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, its meaning is: When he dies.

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Layth—Mujāhid said, concerning *His riches will not avail him when he taraddā*, "When he dies".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *when he falls*, "When he dies".

Abu Kurayb—Ashjaʿī—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Layth—Mujāhid said, "When he dies."

Q. 92:12

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is that of the people who said: Its meaning is: "*When he falls* into Gehenna," because that is the well-known meaning of *taraddā*. When one intends for its meaning to be "death", one would say "*radiya* so-and-so". It is very rare to use *taraddā* [to mean "he dies"].[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! to Us belongs the guidance*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Lo! to Us belongs* the clarification of truth from falsehood and obedience from disobedience.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuraykʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Lo! to Us belongs the guidance*, "God is responsible for the clarification between what He has made lawful and unlawful, and between what constitutes obedience to Him and disobedience."

[1] In other words, Form I of *r-d-y* is employed to mean "he dies" instead of the Form V verb from this root.

One of the experts in the Arabic language[1] interpreted this verse to mean: Whoever travels according to the guidance, his path belongs to God. This is like His statement, *And to God belongs the direction of the way* (Q.16:9), which he says means: "He who seeks God is on the straight path."

It also has been alleged that its meaning is: "*To Us belongs the guidance* and the act of leading astray," as He said, [*He*] *has given you coats to ward off the heat from you* (Q.16:81); these coats ward off both the heat and the cold [even though only the heat is mentioned].

INTERPRETATION OF *And lo! to Us belong the Hereafter and the former* [*world*]

He says: "*And lo! to Us belongs* the ownership of all that is in the temporal world and the Hereafter. We give from the two worlds to whomever among our creatures We will, and We deprive from it whomever We will." God (Majestic is His praise) intends this verse to mean that He grants success, in the form of obedience to Him, to whomever He loves among His creatures. He dignifies him with this in the temporal world and prepares [additional] great honours and rewards for him in the Hereafter. [God] also forsakes whomever He wills among His creatures, by failing to help them be obedient to Him. [God] abases him with acts of disobedience in this world, and He humiliates him in the Hereafter with His punishment. Then God (may His praise be magnified) says, *Therefore have I warned you of a raging Fire.*

Q. 92:13–14

INTERPRETATION OF *Therefore have I warned you of a raging Fire*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, *I have warned you of a blazing Fire*, which is the Fire of Gehenna. He says: Be aware that if you disobey your Lord in the temporal world and disbelieve in Him, you will enter it in the Hereafter.

Talazzā is said, even though the intended meaning is t*alazzā* in the nominative case, because it is a verb that will happen in the future. Were it a verb in the past tense, it would have been *Therefore have I warned you of a Fire* talazzat.[2]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

[1] This is al-Farrāʾ; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:271.
[2] This passage is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:271.

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashʿab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *A Fire talaẓẓā*, "Blazing".

INTERPRETATION OF *Which none will enter save the most wretched one*

God (Majestic is His praise) says: None enters it nor goes into its roasting heat save *the most wretched who denies and turns away*. He says: *Who denies* the signs of His Lord, turns away from them and does not affirm them.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Hishām b. al-Ghāz—Makḥūl—Abū Hurayra said, "You will enter the Garden, save for he who refuses." They said, "O Abū Hurayra, who will refuse to enter the Garden?" Then he recited, [He] *who denies and turns away*.

Q. 92:15-17

Al-Ḥasan b. Nāṣiḥ—al-Ḥasan b. Ḥabīb and Muʿādh b. Muʿādh—al-Ashʿath—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Which none will enter save the most wretched one*,[1] "The person who associates partners with God."

One of the experts in the Arabic language[2] said: *Kadhdhaba* does not mean literally "to deny or reject", but rather it means: "to come up short regarding that which God has commanded him to do." The verb *kadhdhaba* can be used if one sets out to engage the enemy yet abstains [from fighting] and returns home. He mentioned that he heard one of the Arabs[3] say, "None of their blades came up short (*laysa li-ḥaddihim makhdhūba*),"[4] with the meaning that when they engaged the enemy, they all fought and none of them fled. The same meaning can be seen in God's statement, *There is no denying it will occur* (Q.56:2), [meaning this is the reality].[5]

INTERPRETATION OF *Far removed from it will be the righteous*

1 The narrator indicates that Muʿādh quoted the next verse (*who denies and turns away*) too in his narration of this report.
2 This is al-Farrāʾ; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:272.
3 Al-Farrāʾ says, "I heard Abū Tharwān say, concerning Banū Numayr…"; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:272.
4 In the edited edition of *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, the text reads *laysa li-jaddihim makhdhūba*, which would mean: "None of their ancestors fled battle"; al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:272. The editors obtained this reading from Qurṭubī's *Tafsīr*. The Dār Hajar editors also prefer the reading *jaddihim* instead of *haddihim*, despite the manuscript evidence in favour of the latter; 24:477 (note 5).
5 This last clause is from the previously cited source.

He says: "The righteous one will be protected from entering the raging Fire." The nominal form *afʿal* is used here in place of *faʿīl*, as the poet Tarafa says,[1]

tamannā rijālun an amūta wa-in amut
fa-tilka sabīlun lastu fihā bi-awḥadi

Men wish me dead, but even were I to die,
Hardly would I be alone on this path!

INTERPRETATION OF *Who gives his wealth to purify himself*

He says: The one *who* gives *his wealth* in the temporal world, in compliance with the claims of God which He has made incumbent upon him, *yatazakkā*—in other words, he becomes purified from his sins through his acts of giving.

Q. 92:18-2

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[92:19] *And none has with him any favour (requiring) requital;*
[92:20] *Rather, he seeks the Face of his Lord Most High.*
[92:21] *Verily will he be pleased.*

One of the experts in the Arabic language[2] interpreted this verse to mean: None of God's creatures has [any claim] on the person who gives his wealth in the path of God, in order to purify himself, on account of *a favour (requiring) requital*. In other words, there is no benefit[3] which he must pay back with his wealth. He says: This person did not spend any of his wealth like this, nor give what he gave from [a benefit] which he owed another person, or to pay off a debt which he owed him, or to repay an earlier favour he had bestowed upon him; rather, he gives in compliance with the claims of God, *seeking the Face of* God. He said: The word *illā* in this context means *lakinna* ("but, rather"). He added: It is also possible for the verb indicating requital to be in the future [tense], which would render the meaning: "He did not intend for what he spent to be paid back by anyone [in the future]." In this case, the *lām* that is affixed to *aḥad* would

1 The point of this verse is that Tarafa uses the word *awḥad* in the place of *waḥīd* ("alone"), just as the Qurʾān uses *atqā* instead of *taqī* in this verse. This verse is found in Abū ʿUbayda, Majāz *al-Qurʾān*, 2:300.
2 This is al-Farrāʾ; see his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:272–3.
3 Literally, "a hand"; for the expression *li-fulān ʿindī yad*, see Hava, 901.

be undertood as being affixed to the object pronoun *hu* in the genitive case, which is affixed to *ʿind*. It would be as if you said "He did not spend any favour on anyone for the purpose of securing a reward for it [in the future]." [In other words, instead of the Qur'ānic *mā li-aḥadin ʿindahu*, one rearranges the words to get *mā lahu ʿinda aḥadin*.]

He continued: When the meaning is clearly understood, the Arabs will deliberately put the particles and other small words in the wrong places, as is evidenced by this verse of al-Nābigha:[1]

wa-qad khiftu hattā mā tazidu makhāfatī
ʿalā waʿilin fi dhiʾl-maṭārati ʿāqili

I became so frightened to the point that my fear
Was not less than [the fear] of an antelope, high up on the side
of Mount Dhū'l-Maṭāra.

Q. 92:20

[Al-Farrā' said:] The meaning of this verse is: "to the point that an antelope's fear was not greater than my fear." [One reads *hattā mā tazidu makhāfatu waʿilin ʿalā makhāfatī* instead of *mā tazīdu makhāfatī ʿalā waʿilin*.]

This is how the expert in the Arabic language, whom we have mentioned, interpreted [this Qur'ānic verse], who claimed that it is sound on the basis of the reports that the interpreters have brought forth. They said: It came down concerning Abū Bakr, on account of his manumission of the slaves whom he manumitted, seeking *the Face of his Lord*.

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And none has with him any favour (requiring) requital; rather, he seeks the Face of his Lord Most High. Verily will he be pleased*, "He does not do this in order to receive a reward from the people or requital; rather, his acts of giving are just for God."

Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Anmāṭī—Hārūn b. Maʿrūf—Bishr b. al-Sarī—Muṣʿab b. Thābit—ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd Allāh—his father said, "This verse came down regarding Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq: *And none has with him any favour (requiring) requital; rather, he seeks the Face of his Lord Most High. Verily will he be pleased*."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar said, "I was informed that Saʿīd [b. al-Musayyab]"[2]—Qatāda said, concerning *And none has with him any favour (requiring) requital,*

[1] See line 18 of poem 26 of his *Diwān*, 144.
[2] Following the Dār Hajar edition and explanation of this *isnād*; 24:479.

"This verse came down regarding Abū Bakr, when he manumitted six or seven people without seeking any compensation or gratitude from them. Among them were Bilāl and ʿĀmir b. Fuhayra."

According to this interpretation, which we have just mentioned on the authority of these men, it is preferable for the phrase *Rather, he seeks the Face of his Lord Most High* to be in the accusative case on account of the exception-clause from the meaning of His statement, *And none has with him any favour (requiring) requital*. This is because the meaning of the passage is "He does not give what he gives of his wealth seeking a reward from anyone *except he seeks the Face of His Lord*." It is also possible for this phrase to be in the accusative case after the exception particle, even if what is prior to it is in a different case, as the poet al-Nābigha has said,[1]

... wa-mā biʾl-rabʿi min ahadi
illā awariyya laʾyan mā ubayyinuhā[2]

...not a single one of them was in their encampments,
Except for the [empty] places of confinement of the beasts, Q. 92:21
which, with difficulty, I distinguished

INTERPRETATION OF *Verily will he be pleased*

He says: When he meets His Lord, this person who donates his wealth in compliance with God's claims (Mighty and Majestic is He) to purify himself *will be pleased* with what God rewards him in the Hereafter in compensation for what he has done in the temporal world in His path.

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Layl

[1] See lines 2–3 of poem 1 in his *Diwān*, 14–15. These verses are fully cited in Ṭabarī's commentary on Q. 1:7; see volume 1.
[2] The end of the first hemistich prior to the exception particle *illā* is in the genitive case, whereas what follows the particle is in the accusative case. The second hemistich is translated in Lane's *Lexicon*, "*b-y-n*".

THE EARTHQUAKE
SŪRAT AL-ZALZALA
(Q. 99:1–8)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[99:1] *When the earth is shaken with her earthquake* [99:2] *And the earth yields up her burdens,* [99:3] *And man says, What ails her?* [99:4] *On that day she will relate her chronicles,* [99:5] *Because your Lord inspires her.* [99:6] *On that day in scattered groups humanity will issue forth to be shown their deeds.* [99:7] *And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it,* [99:8] *And whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *When the earth is shaken* at the rising of the Last Hour, *with her earthquake,* it quakes violently.

The word *zilzāl* is a verbal noun with a *kasra* under the [initial] *zāy,* while *zalzāl* (with a *fatḥa*) is a noun. The word *zilzāl* is annexed to *the earth,* as it serves as its descriptor, like the expression *la-ukrimannaka karāmataka* ("I will honour you with a great honour")[1] really means *la-ukrimannaka karāmatan.* This is good [stylistically] in the case of *zilzālahā* because it is in harmony with all of the verses that follow it at the beginning of this *sūra.*[2]

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Yamān—Ashʿath—Jaʿfar—Saʿīd [b. Jubayr] said, "There was an earthquake at the time of ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd], and he said to it, 'What ails you?' [Then he explained, saying] 'Had the [earthquake] spoken [back to me], the Last Hour would have arisen.'"

INTERPRETATION OF *And the earth yields up her burdens*

He says: *And the earth yields up* all the deceased inside her [and they are]

1 Literally, "I will honour you with your great honour."

2 The first five verses of this *sūra* all end with the feminine suffix pronoun *hā,* and four of them even rhyme with the ending *lahā.* Most of this paragraph is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān,* 3:283.

alive. The deceased inside the earth is a burden for her, and the living person on her surface is a burden on her.[1]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sinān al-Qazzāz—Abū ʿĀṣim—Shabīb—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And the earth yields up her burdens,* "The deceased".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*And the earth yields up her burdens,* meaning the deceased."

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. Umar][2]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *And the earth yields up her burdens,* "Those who are in their graves."

Q. 99:2-3

INTERPRETATION OF *And man says, What ails her? On that day she will relate her chronicles*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *When the earth is shaken* at the rising of the Last Hour, humanity will say, "What ails the earth and what is she relating?" *On that day she will relate her chronicles.*

OPINION: Ibn ʿAbbās, according to Sinān al-Qazzāz—Abū ʿĀṣim—Shabīb—Ikrima, would say, "*And man,* meaning the disbeliever, *says, What ails her? On that day* the earth *will relate her chronicles.*" This act of her relating her chronicles is consistent with what we have mentioned above, regarding ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd, that the earth [literally] will say, "God has commanded me to do this, inspired me [to say] it, and granted me permission [to do] it."

OPINION: As for Saʿīd b. Jubayr, he would say about this what we have narrated from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd al-Malik said, "One time I heard Saʿīd b. Jubayr recite at the sunset prayer *On that day she will announce* (*tunbiʾu*) *her chronicles* and, another time, he recited *On that day she will relate her chronicles.* It is as if Saʿīd understood *tuḥaddithu* to mean 'she will announce' and this announcement is the explulsion of the earth's burdens from her interior to her surface."

1 This sentence is found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān,* 2:306.

2 The text erroneously has "both (*jamiʿan*)" after Warqāʾ, even though the Muḥammad b. ʿAmr chain is not present in this narration; see the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* (24:559) and the Ḥalabī edition, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān,* 30:266.

ṬABARĪ SAID: This is an opinion, in my estimation, that has a sound meaning, according to which the interpretation would be "On that day, the earth clarifies her reports, by means of the earthquake and shaking, expulsion of the deceased from her interior to her surface, all on account of God's inspiration to her and His permission for her to do this." This is also the meaning of His statement *Because your Lord inspires her.*

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid says, concerning God's statement *And the earth yields up her burdens, "Your Lord inspires her,"*[1]

He said,[2] "He commanded her, then [the earth] *cast out all that was in her, and she became empty* (Q.84:4)."

Q. 99:3 Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Because your Lord inspires her,* "He commanded her."

It has been alleged that ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] would read *On that day she will* announce (*tunabbiʾu*) *her chronicles.*[3]

It has also been said that the meaning is that the earth *will relate her chronicles* of everyone who was on her surface—what good and evil both the people of obedience and those of disobedience did while they were upon her.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *On that day she will relate her chronicles,* "All the good and evil that was done upon her, *because your Lord inspires her.*" He said, "[God] informed her of this."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *On that day she will relate her chronicles,* "[Meaning] all of the deeds of the servants who were in her and upon her."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *On that day she will relate her chronicles,*

1 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 24:560.
2 It is probably Mujāhid who made this statement, in light of the following report.
3 This reading is mentioned in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:284.

"she will inform humanity of what they did [while they were] upon her."

It has been said that what is meant by *awḥā lahā* ("[your Lord] inspires her") is *awḥā ilayhā* ("inspires to her").

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Sinān al-Qazzāz—Abū ʿĀṣim—Shabīb—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *awḥā lahā,* "He inspires to her."

INTERPRETATION OF *On that day in scattered groups humanity will issue forth*

It has been said that the meaning of this clause comes after the following clause, *to be shown their deeds.* They said: The passage should read: *On that day she will relate her chronicles because your Lord inspires her [for them] to be shown their deeds. On that day, in scattered groups, humanity will issue forth.* They said: However, this clause has been inserted in the middle of this sentence.[1]

The meaning of His statement, *On that day in scattered groups humanity will issue forth,* Q. 99:4-7 is: "*On that day humanity will issue forth* to the Station of Recompense in many groups and divisions. He takes those of the right hand to the Garden and those of the left hand to Hellfire."

INTERPRETATION OF *to be shown their deeds*

He says: *On that day in scattered groups humanity will issue forth,* scattered on the right and on the left, *to be shown their deeds.* On that day, the person who was righteous in the temporal world, obeying God in his actions, will see what noble things God has prepared for him, on account of his obedience in the temporal world. The sinner who disobeyed God with his actions will see the recompense for his actions and what lowliness and abasement God has prepared for him in Gehenna, on account of his disobedience in the temporal world and his disbelief in Him.

INTERPRETATION OF *And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it, and whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it*

God says: *And whoever does,* in the temporal world, an *atom's* measure of *good will see* his reward for it there, *and whoever does,* in the temporal world, an *atom's* measure of *ill will see* the recompense for it there.

It has also been said: The sentence *And whoever does* is a declaration of [what will happen] in the Hereafter, because of the listener's

1 This opinion is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:283–4.

understanding that its meaning is: "And whoever *did* [this deed will see his reward or punishment in the Hereafter"], on account of the earlier indicator in His statement *On that day* [in the Hereafter] *in scattered groups humanity will issue forth to be shown their* deeds. However, when the meaning of this passage is clearly understood by the listeners, and there is in His statement *does* an exhortation to the people of the temporal world to act obediently to God and refrain from disobeying Him, along with what I mentioned regarding the implied meaning of the preceding verses, such that the intended meaning of the verb [*does*] is in the past tense, the declaration is put in the future tense.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have said, namely that all people will see their deeds. An account of those who said that:

Q. 99:8

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it then*, "Neither believer nor disbeliever will perform a single good or ill act in the temporal world except that God will bring it forth to them. As for the believer, he will see his good deeds and his bad deeds, and then God will forgive his bad deeds. As for the disbeliever, his good deeds will be rejected and he will be punished for his bad deeds."

Moreover, there is another interpretation that has been proposed by some [interpreters] who said: As for the believer, the punishment for his bad deeds comes quickly to him in the temporal world, while the reward for his good deeds is postponed; as for the disbeliever, the reward for his good deeds comes quickly to him in the temporal world, while the punishment for his bad deeds is postponed.

An account of those who said that:

Mūsā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Masrūqī—Muḥammad b. Bishr—Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Ṭāʾifī—ʿAmr b. Qatāda said, "I heard Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qurażī explain this verse, *And whoever does an atom's weight*, saying, '*And whoever does an atom's weight* of *good* among the disbelievers will see, in the temporal world, his reward [affecting] himself, his family, his wealth and his children, until he leaves this world bereft of any goodness. *And whoever*, among the believers, *does ill an atom's weight will see it then*, meaning he will see his punishment in the temporal world [afflicting] himself, his family, his wealth and his children, until he leaves this world having nothing [evil].'"

Maḥmūd b. Khidāsh—Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Wāsiṭī—Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Ṭāʾifī—ʿAmr b. Dīnār said, "I asked Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qurażī about these verses, *And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it then*, and he said, '*And whoever does an atom's weight* of *good* among the disbelievers will see his reward [affecting] himself, his family and his wealth, until he leaves this world bereft of any goodness. *And whoever does an atom's weight* of *ill* among the believers will see his punishment [afflicting] himself, his family and his wealth, until he leaves this world free from evil.'"

Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb al-Ḥassānī—al-Haytham b. al-Rabīʿ—Simāk b. Aṭiyya—Ayyūb—Abū Qilāba—Anas said, "Abū Bakr was eating with the Prophet (ṣ) when these verses were sent down: *And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it then*. Abū Bakr withdrew his hand [from the food], saying, 'O Messenger of God, will I be punished for an atom's weight of ill that I do?' He replied, 'O Abū Bakr, whatever you see in this world that you dislike, these are the atom-weights of ill. [Know that] God is storing up the atom-weights of goodness until you will be repaid them in full on Resurrection Day.'"[1]

Q. 99:8

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Wahhāb—Ayyūb [al-Sakhtiyānī] said, "We found in the writings (*kitāb*) of Abū Qilāba"[2]—Abū Idrīs [al-Khawlānī] said, "Abū Bakr was eating with the Prophet (ṣ) when these verse were sent down: *And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it then*. Abū Bakr withdrew his hand from the food, saying, 'Will I see what I have done, the good and the bad?'[3] The Prophet (ṣ) said, 'Any of the things you see which you dislike, those are the many atom's weights of ill. [Know that] God is storing for you the atom's weights of good, until they will be given to you on Resurrection Day.' This is affirmed by the Book of God: *Whatever of*

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is also found in the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawyh, as well as books by Ṭabarānī, al-Ḥākim and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:646. Note that Suyūṭī has *la-rāʾin* instead of *ujzā*, which would make Abū Bakr say, "Will I be seeing every atom's weight of ill that I do?" The Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* has *ujzā*; see 24:564–5.

2 Abū Qilāba ʿAbd Allāh b. Zayd al-Jarmī (d. c. 104–7/722–6) is generally considered not to have published his writings as a book. According to Ibn Saʿd, Abū Qilāba bequested his writings to Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, who appears in this *isnād*, prior to his death and ordered that they be burned if Ayyūb was no longer alive; see *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, 9:185.

3 One of the narrators interjects that "I only know of him saying 'what I have done, the good and the bad' in this narration" after the Arabic *innī la-rāʾ mā ʿamiltu?*

misfortune strikes you, it is what your right hands have earned. And He forgives much (Q.42:30)."[1]

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Ayyūb said, "I read in the writings of Abū Qilāba: The verses *And whoever does good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it then* came down while Abū Bakr was eating [with the Prophet (ṣ)]. He withdrew his hand, saying, 'O Messenger of God, will I see what I have done, the good and the bad?' He replied, 'Do you not see the things you dislike? These are the atom's weights of ill. [Know that] God is storing the atom's weights of good until they will be given to you on Resurrection Day.' Abū Idrīs said, 'I see another verse in the Book of God affirming this: *Whatever of misfortune strikes you, it is what your right hands have earned. And He forgives much* (Q.42:30).'"

Q. 99:8

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Dāwūd—Shaʿbī said: Āʾisha said, "O Messenger of God, ʿAbd Allāh b. Judʿān maintained good family relations and did this and that—will this benefit him [in the Hereafter]?" [The Prophet] replied, "No. He never once said, 'O my Lord, forgive me for my sin on the Day of Judgement.'"[2]

[Sufyān] ibn Wakīʿ—Ḥafṣ—Dāwūd—Shaʿbī—Masrūq—Āʾisha said, "I said, 'O Messenger of God, Ibn Judʿān, who lived in the Time before Islam, maintained good family relations and fed poor people—will this benefit him [in the Hereafter]?' He replied, 'This will not benefit him, for never once did he say, "O my Lord, forgive me for my sin on the Day of Judgement."'"

Ibn al-Muthannā—Ibn Abī ʿAdī—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī—Āʾisha, Mother of the Believers, said, "O Messenger of God, truly ʿAbd Allāh b. Judʿān maintained good family relations, entertained his guests and freed captives—will any of this benefit him [in the Hereafter]?" He replied, "No. He never once said, 'O my Lord, forgive me for my sin on the Day of Judgement.'"

Ibn al-Muthannā—Ibn Abī ʿAdī—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—ʿAlqama—Salama b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī said, "O Messenger of God, our mother passed away during the Time before Islam. She maintained good family

[1] Suyūṭī only ascribes this *hadith* to the Qur'ānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:647–8.

[2] This supplication echoes Q.26:82: *And Who, I ardently hope, will forgive me my sin on the Day of Judgement*. Suyūṭī does not mention this *hadith* at this juncture in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, while the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* locate it in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Muslim and Ibn Ḥibbān, and the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal: 24:566. Suyūṭī mentions this *hadith* in his commentary on Q.26:82 and locates it in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* and al-Ḥākim's *Mustadrak*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:365.

relations, entertained guests and did this and that—will any of this benefit her [in the Hereafter]?" "No," he replied.[1]

Ibn al-Muthannā—al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Minhāl—al-Muʿtamir b. Sulaymān—Dāwūd—Shaʿbī—ʿAlqama b. Qays—Salama b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī said: "My brother and I went to the Messenger of God (ṣ) and I said, 'O Messenger of God, our mother, in the Time before Islam, would entertain guests and maintain good family relations—will any of her deeds benefit her [in the Hereafter]?" "No," he replied.

A nearly identical report was narrated to me from Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Sadrān and Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—al-Muʿtamir b. Sulaymān—Dāwūd b. Abī Hind—Shaʿbī—ʿAlqama—Salama b. Yazīd—the Prophet (ṣ).

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Amr b. Qatāda[2]—Muḥammad b. Kaʿb said, "As for the believer, he will see his good deeds in the Hereafter, whereas the disbeliever will see his good deeds in this world."

Q. 99:8

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Abū ʿĀṣim—Abū Naʿāma—ʿAbd al-Azīz b. Bushayr al-Ḍabbī, whose grandfather was Salmān b. ʿĀmir, said, "Salmān b. ʿĀmir came to the Messenger of God (ṣ) and said, 'My father maintained good family relations, fulfilled his obligations (*dhimma*) and provided hospitality for guests.' [The Prophet] said, 'Did he die prior to Islam?' He said yes. [The Prophet] said, 'These things will not benefit him,' and [Salmān] turned away. The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'Bring me the old man [who just came].' The man came back and the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'These things will not benefit him, but they will be with his descendants, who will never be disgraced, nor ever abased, nor ever in need.'"[3]

Ibn al-Muthannā and Ibn Bashshār—Abū Dāwūd [al-Ṭayālisī]—Imrān—Qatāda—Anas—the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "God does not wrong the believer over a single good deed for which he will be rewarded from His sustenance in the temporal world and compensated for it in the Hereafter. As for the disbeliever, God gives him some of [the reward] in the temporal world, but on Resurrection Day, he is bereft of any goodness."[4]

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Layth—al-Muʿallā—

[1] The editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* locate this *hadith* in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, the *Tārīkh* of Bukhārī and a few additional non-canonical collections: 24:567.

[2] Following the emendation in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 24:567, note 3.

[3] According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found only in Ṭabarī's commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:648.

[4] According to Suyūṭī, in his commentary on Q.4:40, this *hadith* is found also in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and the *Musnads* of Ṭayālisī and Ibn Ḥanbal; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 2:290.

Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qurazī said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "There is no good deed done by a righteous believer or unbeliever except that its reward comes about from God either quickly in His temporal world or later in His Hereafter."[1]

Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Ibn Wahb—Ḥuyayy b. ʿAbd Allāh—Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥubulī—ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ said, "The *[sūra] When the earth is shaken with her earthquake* was sent down while Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq was sitting and he began to cry while it was being sent down. The Messenger of God (ṣ) said to him, 'O Abū Bakr, what is causing you to cry?' He replied, 'This *sūra* is making me cry.' The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'If you did not err and commit sins so that God could forgive you, God would have created [a different] community that would have erred and committed sins so that He could forgive them.'"[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: These reports, on the authority of the Messenger of God (ṣ), inform us that the believer will see the punishment for his bad deeds in this world and the reward for his good deeds in the Hereafter; that the disbeliever will see the reward for his good deeds in this world and the punishment for his bad deeds in the Hereafter; and that the disbeliever will not benefit in the Hereafter from the good deeds he did in the temporal world while he was in a state of disbelief.

Q. 99:8

Abū Kurayb—Ibn ʿAlī—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm al-Taymī said, "I saw seventy disciples of Ibn Masʿūd, the youngest of whom was al-Hārith b. Suwayd, whom I heard recite from *When the earth is shaken with her earthquake* through *and whoever does ill an atom's weight will see it then* and say, 'Truly this is a most intense accounting (*iḥṣāʾ shadīd*)!'"

It has been said that a *dharra* (*atom*) is "a weightless red worm (*dūda*)".

An account of those who said that:

Isḥāq b. Wahb al-ʿAllāf and Muḥammad b. Sinān al-Qazzāz—Abū ʿĀṣim—Shabīb b. Bishr—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said, according to Ibn Sinān, concerning *a dharra's weight*, "The weight of a red grub (*dharra*)." Ibn Wahb said that [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, "[The weight of] a red ant."

Isḥāq [b. Wahb] said that Yazīd b. Hārūn said, "They claimed that this red worm is weightless."

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Zalzala

1 According to the editors of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq: 24:568.

2 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found also in the Qurʾānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh, and books by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, Ṭabarānī and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:646.

THE CHARGERS
SŪRAT AL-ʿĀDIYĀT
(Q. 100:1–11)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[100:1] *By the snorting chargers,* [100:2] *Striking sparks of fire;* [100:3] *And raiders at dawn,* [100:4] *Raising, therein, a trail of dust,* [100:5] *Cleaving, therewith, a host!* [100:6] *Lo! man is an ingrate to his Lord* [100:7] *And lo! to that He is a witness;* [100:8] *And lo! in the love of wealth he is strong.* [100:9] *Knows he not that, when the contents of the graves are poured forth* [100:10] *And the secrets of the chests are made known,* [100:11] *On that day, concerning them, their Lord will be perfectly informed?*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of His statement *By the snorting chargers.*

OPINION: Some of them said: The *ʿādiyāt ḍabḥan* are the charging horses, which are neighing with a yearning sound (*tuḥamḥim*).

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *By the snorting chargers*, "[Meaning] horses". Someone other than Ibn ʿAbbās claimed they were camels.

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Muḥammad]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *By the snorting chargers*: Ibn ʿAbbās said, "They are in battle."

Hannād—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning His statement *By the snorting chargers*, "They are horses."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ said, "ʿIkrima was asked about His statement *By the snorting chargers*. He said, 'Have you not seen how horses snort when they run?'"

Ibrāhīm b. Saʿīd al-Jawharī—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—Ibn Jurayj—ʿAṭāʾ said, "There is no animal which snorts except dogs and horses."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement, *By the snorting chargers*, "Horses snort."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *By the snorting chargers*, "They are horses who have charged to the point that they snort."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *By the snorting chargers*, "They are horses who charge to the point that they snort."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said the same thing he said in the above report from Bishr on the authority of Yazīd.

Q. 100:1

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Saʿīd said, "I heard Sālim recite *By the snorting chargers* and say, 'These are horses that snort while charging.'"

[Abu Kurayb]—Wakīʿ—Wāṣil—ʿAṭāʾ said, concerning *By the snorting chargers*, "Horses".

[Abū Kurayb]—Wakīʿ—Sufyān b. ʿUyayna—ʿAmr—ʿAṭāʾ—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The only creatures that snort are dogs and horses."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *By the snorting chargers*, "They are horses."

Saʿīd b. al-Rabīʿ al-Rāzī—Sufyān b. ʿUyayna—ʿAmr—ʿAṭāʾ—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "They are horses, meaning His statement *By the snorting chargers*." Ibn ʿAbbās said, "They are horses."[1]

OPINION: Others said: They are camels.

An account of those who said that:

Abū'l-Sāʾib—Abū Muʿāwiya—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning *By the snorting chargers*, "They are camels."

Two nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm—ʿAbd Allāh; and ʿĪsā b. ʿUthmān al-Ramlī—my uncle Yaḥyā b. ʿĪsā al-Ramlī—al-Aʿmash—Ibrāhīm—ʿAbd Allāh.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Ibrāhīm—'Abd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning *By the snorting chargers*, "They are camels who snort when they breath."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Abū Ṣakhr—Abū Muʿāwiya al-Bajalī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said,

> While I was sitting at Ḥijr, a man came to ask me about *By the snorting chargers*. I said to him, "These are horses when they gallop in the path of God, then settle for the night so [their riders] can prepare their cooking fires." The man turned away from me and went to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r), who was at the well of Zamzam, and asked him about *By the snorting chargers*. He said, "Have you asked anyone else about this prior to me?" He said, "Yes, I asked Ibn ʿAbbās about it, and he said they were horses when they galloped in the path of God." [ʿAlī said], "Go and summon him for me." When I came and stopped in front of him, [ʿAlī] said, "You are giving opinions (*fatwās*) on topics of which you have no knowledge! By God! The first raid in Islam was Badr, and there were only two horses with us: one belonged to Zubayr, and the other to Miqdād. How can these [two horses] be the *snorting chargers*? Rather, the *snorting chargers* are [the sacrificial camels] who go from Arafat to Muzdalifa to Mina [during the Ḥajj]."

Ibn ʿAbbās said, "I retract my opinion and defer to what ʿAlī (r) said."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, concerning *By the snorting chargers*, "Camels".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *By the snorting chargers*: Ibn Masʿūd said, "This is during the Ḥajj."

Saʿīd b. al-Rabīʿ al-Rāzī—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—ʿAmr b. Dīnār—Ubayd b. Umayr said, "They are camels, meaning *By the snorting chargers*."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī] said, concerning *By the snorting chargers*: Ibn Masʿūd said, "They are camels."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion, in my estimation, regarding that which is most likely to be correct is that of the people who said: What is meant by *chargers* is "horses". That is because camels do not snort and only horses snort. God (Exalted is He) has informed us that [these creatures] who are

[1] Following the reading of this report in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 24:572.

Q. 100:

charging are snorting. The word *ḍabḥ* means what I have just mentioned previously.

The following interpreters said what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibrāhīm b. Saʿīd al-Jawharī—Abū Muʿāwiya—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Abū Ṣāliḥ said: ʿAlī (r) said, "The word *ḍabḥ* with regards to horses means 'neighing with a yearning sound', and with regards to camels it means 'their breath'."

[Ibrāhīm b. Saʿīd]—Sufyān [b. ʿUyayna]—Ibn Jurayj—ʿAṭāʾ said, "I heard Ibn ʿAbbās describe *ḍabḥ* by saying *ah ah*."

INTERPRETATION OF *Striking sparks of fire*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *Striking sparks of fire* (*fa'l-mūriyāt qadḥan*).

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OPINION: Some of them said: They are the horses striking sparks of fire with their hooves.

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ said, "ʿIkrima was asked about the meaning of His statement *fa'l-mūriyāt qadḥan* and he replied, 'They struck and made sparks.'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Striking sparks of fire*, "They are horses." Kalbī[1] said, "They strike their hooves to the point that they produce fire."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Wāṣil—ʿAṭāʾ said, concerning *Striking sparks of fire*, "They produce fire from [striking] their hooves."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Striking sparks of fire*, "They produce fire from striking their hooves on the stones [on the ground]."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is that the horses arouse warlike feelings among their fellow horses and their riders.

An account of those who say that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Striking sparks of fire*, "They arouse warlike feelings among themselves and their adversaries."

[1] This is a reference to Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī, an exegete whom Ṭabarī generally shuns.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Striking sparks of fire*, "They arouse warlike feelings among themselves and their adversaries."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that are those people who strike up a fire after their return from battle.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Abū Ṣakhr—Abū Muʿāwiya al-Bajalī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r) asked me about *By the snorting chargers, striking sparks of fire* and I said to him, 'Horses, when they gallop in the path of God, then they settle for the night, and [their riders] prepare their food and make fires.'"

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is the stratagem of the men.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Striking sparks of fire*, "Stratagem".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *Striking sparks of fire*, "The stratagem of the men."

OPINION: Others said: These are the tongues.

An account of those who said that:

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa—Yūnus b. Muḥammad—Ḥammād b. Salama—Simāk b. Ḥarb—ʿIkrima said, "It has been alleged that *Striking sparks of fire* are the tongues."[1]

OPINION: Others said: These are camels that, when travelling, scatter pebbles with the soles of their feet.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning *Striking sparks of fire*, "[They are camels], when they scatter pebbles with the soles of their feet, striking some pebbles against others, causing sparks of fire to come forth."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely correct is for one to say: Truly God (Exalted is His remembrance) swore by the

[1] Ṭabarī clarifies below that "striking tongues" is a similitude for "speaking".

mūriyāt who strike fire. Horses strike fire with their hooves, people strike fire with flint, tongues strike speech metaphorically, men strike up a stratagem metaphorically, and likewise horses arouse warlike feelings among their riders when they meet for battle. Since God did not provide any indicator showing His intention for some of these interpretations instead of others, everything that strikes a fire is included in the meaning of that by which He swore, on account of its unspecified apparent meaning.

INTERPRETATION OF *And the raiders at dawn*

The interpreters disagreed over the interpretation of *And the raiders at dawn* (*fa'l-mughīrāt ṣubḥan*).

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: *And the raiders at dawn* against their enemy, [who raid] openly.

An account of those who said that:

Q. 100:3 Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Abū Ṣakhr—Abū Muʿāwiya al-Bajalī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "A man asked me about *And the raiders at dawn* and I replied, 'Horses galloping [to war] in the path of God.'"

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ said, "I asked ʿIkrima about His statement *And the raiders at dawn* and he replied, 'They are galloping to face the enemy in a dawn raid.'"

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *And the raiders at dawn*, "[They are] horses."

Hannād—Abūʾl-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—ʿIkrima said,[1] concerning *And the raiders at dawn*, "They are horses."

Bishr [b. Muʾādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the raiders at dawn*, "These people made a raid against their enemy after they woke up in the morning."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And the raiders at dawn*, "They made a raid as soon as they woke up in the morning."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And the raiders at dawn*, "These people made a raid as soon as they woke up in the morning."

[1] Following the reading of the *isnād* in the Dār Hajar edition, 24:579 (note 3).

OPINION: Others said: What is meant by that are the camels, when they deliver their riders from Jamʿ to Mina on the Day of Sacrifice [at the conclusion of the Ḥajj].

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning *And the raiders at dawn*: When they travel from Jamʿ [to Mina during the Ḥajj].

TABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is for one to say: Truly God (Majestic is His praise) swore by *the mughīrāt at dawn*, and He did not specify one type of raider over another. Every morning raider is included in the meaning of [this oath] by which He swore.

Zayd b. Aslam mentioned the interpretation of these words (*ahruf*) and rejected them all, saying, "This is merely an oath by which God swore."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *By the snorting chargers, striking sparks of fire*, "This is [merely] an oath by which God swore." Then he mentioned *Cleaving, therewith, a host* and said, "All of these verses are an oath, and my father [Zayd b. Aslam] did not investigate [its true meaning] whenever he was asked about it, nor would he mention it (meaning the oath)." Q. 100:

INTERPRETATION OF *Raising, therein, a trail of dust*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: They raise a cloud of dust in the valley.

The word *naqʿ* means "dust", although some say that it means: "soil". The suffix pronoun *hi* [in *fa-atharna bihi naqʿan*] alludes to a place whose identity is never mentioned, since it is obvious that dust can only be stirred up in a certain place, which renders it superfluous to mention any location, on account of the listeners' understanding of its meaning.[1]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Raising, therein, a trail of dust*, "The horses".

[1] Most of this paragraph is found in the more detailed explanation of this verse in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:284–5. The basic problem al-Farrāʾ is addressing is that pronouns are generally employed only after an explicit subject has been stated. In this passage, he shows that the Qurʾān commonly uses pronouns without any prior indication of the subject they are representing.

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Wāṣil—ʿAṭāʾ and Ibn Zayd said, "*Naqʿ* is dust."

Hannād—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning *Raising, therein, a trail of dust*, "They, meaning the horses, stir up dust."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ said, "ʿIkrima was asked about His statement *Raising, therein, a trail of dust* and he replied, 'They stir up the soil with their hooves.'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Raising, therein, a trail of dust*, "They stir up a cloud of soil with their hooves."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda.

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Raising, therein, a trail of dust*, "They stir up dust therein."

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Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Abū Ṣakhr—Abū Muʿāwiya al-Bajalī—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "ʿAlī said to me, '*The snorting chargers* are those who go from Arafat to Muzdalifa, then from Muzdalifa to Mina [in the Ḥajj], *raising therein a trail of dust*. [This refers to] the ground, as it is trampled under their feet and hooves.'"

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, concerning *Raising, therein, a trail of dust*, "As they travel, they stir up the soil."

INTERPRETATION OF *Cleaving, therewith, a host*

OPINION: God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *Cleaving* the host of people at the centre with their riders. The verb in the phrase "I *wasaṭtu* the people" without a *shadda* [on the *sīn*] has the same meaning as *wassaṭtuhu* [Form II] and *tawassaṭtuhu* [Form V].[1]

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ said, "ʿIkrima was asked about His statement *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan* and he replied, 'A host of disbelievers'."

Hannād al-Sarī—Abū'l-Aḥwaṣ—Simāk—ʿIkrima said, concerning *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "A host of people".

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd

1 This explanation is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:285.

al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "It is a host of people."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Wāṣil—ʿAṭāʾ said, concerning *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "A host of the enemy".

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "A host of these and those".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "They cleave a host of people."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "They cleave an enemy host."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "They cleave a host of people."

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[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning His statement *Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, "The *jamʿ* is a squadron."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is *cleaving, therewith*, Muzdalifa [during the Ḥajj].

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīra—Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaʿī]—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd] said, "*Cleaving, therewith, jamʿan*, meaning Muzdalifa."

INTERPRETATION OF *Lo! man is an ingrate to his Lord*

He says: *Lo! man* is an ingrate regarding the bounties of his Lord.

[The expression] "*kunūd* earth" means: "barren earth, on which nothing can grow."[1] The poet al-Aʿshā said,

ahdith lahā tuhdith li-waṣlika innahā
kunudun li-waṣli'l-zā'iri'l-mu'tādi

Renew with her the union, she will renew [her rejection], for she is niggardly in her union with the besotted visitor.[2]

It has been alleged that the tribe of Kinda was so called because they severed their ties with their forefathers.

1 This definition and the following verse of poetry are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:307.
2 I am indebted to Dr Samy Ayoub for the translation of this verse of poetry.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yūsuf al-Jubayrī—Muḥammad b. Kuthayr—Muslim—Mujāhid—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, "[Meaning he is] an ingrate."

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, "An ingrate *to his Lord*."

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, concerning *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, "An ingrate".

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from:

[1] Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid;

[2] Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid; and

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[3] al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid.

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Mahdī b. Maymūn—Shuʿayb b. al-Ḥabḥāb—al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, concerning *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, "He is the ingrate who counts his misfortunes and forgets the blessings from his Lord."

[Abū Kurayb]—Wakīʿ—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ said, "A *kanūd* is an ingrate."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, "Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, 'He blames his Lord and counts his misfortunes.'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *la-kanūd*, "An ingrate".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, "An ingrate".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda.

Yaḥyā b. Ḥabīb b. ʿArabī—Khālid b. al-Ḥārith—Shuʿba—Simāk said, "They are called 'Kinda' because they severed their ties with their forefathers. *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*: An ingrate."

Abū Kurayb—ʿUbayd Allāh—Isrāʾīl—Jaʿfar b. al-Zubayr—al-Qāsim—Abū Umāma said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, concerning

Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord, "An ingrate who eats alone, beats his slave and refuses to give from his portion."[1]

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, "*Kanūd* means 'ingrate'," and he recited *Lo! man is an ingrate* (*la-kafūr*; Q.22:66; 43:15).

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. ʿAyyāsh—Abūʾl-Mughīra ʿAbd al-Quddūs—Ḥarīz b. Uthmān—Ḥamza b. Hānīʾ—Abū Umāma would say, "A *kanūd* is someone who alights by himself, beats his slave and refuses to give from his portion."

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Ḍirārī[2]—Muḥammad b. Sawwār—Abūʾl-Yaqẓān—Sufyān—Hishām—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Lo! man is la-kanūd to his Lord*, "He blames his Lord, counts his misfortunes and forgets his blessings."

INTERPRETATION OF *And lo! to that He is a witness*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And lo!* God *is a witness* to [man's] ingratitude towards his Lord. Q. 100:7

[In this verse,] *shahid* means *shāhid* ("a witness").

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And lo! to that He is a witness*, "*Lo!* God *is to that a witness*."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *And lo! to that He is a witness*, "In one of the [irregular] Qurʾānic readings [one comes across] 'And lo! God is to that a witness.'"[3]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *And lo! to that He is a witness*, "*And lo!* God *is to that a witness*."

INTERPRETATION OF *And lo! in the love of wealth he is strong*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *And lo!* man *is strong in his love* of wealth (*māl*).

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over how to interpret the description of his love of wealth as "strong".

1 According to Suyūṭī, variations of this *hadith* are found in the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh, and books by Ṭabarānī, Bayhaqī and Ibn ʿAsākir; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:654. In the original Arabic, this *hadith* rhymes: *la-kafūrun alladhi ya'kulu wahdahu wa-yadribu 'abdahu wa-yamna'u rifdahu.*

2 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, 24:587.

3 Arabic: *inna'llāha 'alā dhālika la-shahīd.*

OPINION: One of the Basrans[1] said, "The meaning of that is that man is *shadid* on account of his love of wealth, meaning 'miserly'. A miser can be called a *shadid* or a *mutashaddid*," and he cited as evidence of this the verse of Ṭarafa b. al-ʿAbd al-Yashkurī:

arā'l-mawta yaʿtāmu'l-nufūsa wa-yaṣṭafī
ʿaqīlata māli'l-bākhili'l-mutashaddidi

I see death choose the generous and the noble,
While picking over the best part of the hardened miser's spoil.[2]

OPINION: Others said: Its meaning is: His love of wealth is strong.

One of the Kufan grammarians[3] said: The place of *li-ḥubb* is after the word *shadid* in this verse, since it is annexed to it. The [reconstructed] sentence is "Lo! he is strong in his love of wealth."[4] When *love* is put prior to *strong*, the second part of the *idāfa* becomes an ellipsis because of the literary pattern of the previous verses. A similar case can be seen in Sūrat Ibrāhīm: [*Their works*] *are as ashes which the stormy wind blows hard one day* (*yawm ʿāṣif*; Q.14:18). The word *ʿāṣif* ("stormy") does not modify the word *day*, but rather it modifies *wind*. However, since the word *wind* is mentioned prior to the word *day*, *ʿāṣif* is put at the end of the sentence. It is as if one had said "on a day of stormy wind". And God knows best.

Q. 100:8

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And lo! in the love of khayr he is strong*, "The *khayr* is the temporal world, and he recited *if he leaves khayr, that he bequeath* (Q.2:180)." "I [Ibn Wahb] said to him, 'Does *if he leaves khayr* mean wealth?' And he replied 'Yes. What could it be other than wealth [in this context]?[5] It is possible for it to be unlawful, but people still consider it to be "good", so God calls it *khayr* ("good"). He does so because people in the temporal world call it "good", even if it is [in reality]

1 This opinion and verse are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:307–8.
2 Michael Sells, "The *Muʿallaqa* of Tarafa", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 17 (1986): 29. Sells appears to be adopting the alternative reading of *karima* instead of *nufūsa* in the first hemistich.
3 The following passage is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿāni al-Qur'ān*, 3:286–7.
4 Arabic: *innahu la-shadidu ḥubbi'l-khayr*; Dār Hajar, 24:588.
5 The entire verse reads: *It is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you, if he leaves wealth (khayr), that he bequeaths to parents and near relatives in kindness. [This is] a duty for all those who are God-fearing* (Q.2:180). Note the interesting parallel between *khayr* in Arabic and "goods" in English.

awful. Likewise, fighting in the path of God is called *sūʾ* ("evil"),' and he recited *they returned with grace and favour from God, and no evil* (*sūʾ*) *touched them* (Q.3:174)." [Ibn Zayd] said, "This means 'no fighting touched them'. God does not consider this fighting [for His sake] to be 'evil', but the people call it 'evil' [so He calls it that too]."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The interpretation of this passage is: *Lo! man is an ingrate to his Lord; and lo! in the love of wealth he is strong; and lo!* God is *to that* behaviour (*min amrihi*) a witness.

His statement *And lo! to that He is a witness* is inverted and precedes its location in the meaning of the sentence. Instead, it is inserted as a subordinate clause between His statement *Lo! man is an ingrate to his Lord* and His statement *And lo! in the love of wealth he is strong*.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Lo! man is an ingrate to his Lord; and lo! to that He is a witness*, "This is a case of inversion (*maqādim al-kalām*). What is meant by these verses is 'Lo! God *is a witness* that *in the love of wealth* man *is strong*.'"

Q. 100:9

INTERPRETATION OF *Knows he not that, when the contents of the graves are poured forth*

He says: *Knows not* this man, described in the previous verses, *that, when the contents of the graves* are raised up and the deceased in them are brought forth and examined (*buḥitha*) [he will be among them]?

It has been alleged that this [verse was written] "*when the contents of the graves are* examined (*buḥitha*)" in ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd's] codex of the Qur'ān.[1] This is also how [some] interpreters have understood this verse. An account of those who have said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *when the contents of the graves are buʿthira*, "Are examined".

The Arabs say both *buʿthira* and *buḥthira* in their languages; both words mean the same thing.[2]

INTERPRETATION OF *And the secrets of the chests are made known*

1 Al-Farrā' claims to have seen this reading in the actual codex of Ibn Masʿūd; *Maʿāni al-Qur'ān*, 3:286.
2 This sentence is found in al-Farrā', *Maʿāni al-Qur'ān*, 3:286.

He says: [*The secrets of the chests*] are distinguished[1] and made clear.[2] [God] exposes the good and evil that is in the chests of all humanity.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *And the secrets of the chests are ḥuṣṣila*, "Are exposed".

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *And the secrets of the chests are ḥuṣṣila*, "Are distinguished".

INTERPRETATION OF *On that day, concerning them, their Lord will be perfectly informed?*

He says: *On that day, their Lord* will know their deeds—all that they have kept secret and concealed in their chests, and all that their limbs have made public. Nothing is concealed from Him and, on that day, He will recompense them for all of this.

Q. 100:10–11

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-ʿĀdiyāt

1 Abū ʿUbayda also glosses the verb *ḥuṣṣila* as *muyyiza*; *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:308.
2 Al-Farrāʾ also glosses the verb *ḥuṣṣila* as *buyyina*; *Maʿāni al-Qurʾān*, 3:286.

RIVALRY
SŪRAT AL-TAKĀTHUR
(Q. 102:1–8)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[102:1] *Rivalry* (*in worldly increase*) *distracts you* [102:2] *Until you visit the graves.* [102:3] *No indeed, but you will come to know!* [102:4] *Again, no indeed, but you will come to know!* [102:5] *No indeed, would that you knew with certain knowledge!* [102:6] *For you will behold Hellfire.* [102:7] *Again, you will behold it with the eye of certainty.* [102:8] *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, your competition for superiority in the amount of wealth and [family][1] *distracts you* from obeying your Lord and what will save you from His displeasure.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Rivalry distracts you*, "They would say, 'We have more than Banū so-and-so,' or 'We have greater numbers than Banū so-and-so,' and every day they would die, one by one, until the last one of them. By God! They continued on this course until they all became inhabitants of the graves."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Rivalry distracts you*, "They would say, 'We have more than Banū so-and-so,' and 'Banū so-and-so has more than Banū so-and-so.' This would distract them until they died in a state of waywardness."

A statement has been related on the authority of the Prophet (ṣ) that the meaning of this verse is: "rivalry in the acquisition of wealth and goods."

1 Literally, "numbers (*ʿadad*)".

An account of the report concerning that:

Abū Kurayb—Wakī'—Hishām al-Dastuwā'ī—Qatāda—Muṭarrif b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Shikhkhīr—his father came to the Prophet (ṣ) while he was reciting *Rivalry distracts you until you visit the graves*. [Then the Prophet] said, "O son of Adam, you have no wealth save what you eat, and you make [it] vanish. You have no clothes except those which you wear, and you wear [them] out. Or you can give [your wealth] as alms and spend [it in a beneficial manner]."[1]

Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-ʿAsqalānī—Ādam—Ḥammād b. Salama—Thābit al-Bunānī—Anas b. Mālik—Ubayy b. Kaʿb said, "We used to consider this [following] *hadith* to be a Qur'ānic verse: 'If the son of Adam was given two valleys of wealth, he would still desire a third valley. The only thing which can fill the stomach of the son of Adam is dust. Then God accepts the repentance of those who repent.' As soon as the *sūra* [starting] *Rivalry distracts you until you visit the graves* (until its conclusion) came down, [we knew that this *hadith* was not part of the Qur'ān]."[2]

Q. 102:2

His (ṣ) statement following his recitation of this *sūra*, "Your only wealth is this and that," indicates that the [intended] meaning of *Rivalry distracts you* is "wealth".

INTERPRETATION OF *Until you visit the graves*

This means: "Until you go to the graves and are buried therein". In this [verse] there is an indicator of the soundness of the belief in the punishment of the grave,[3] because God (Exalted is His remembrance) informed these people whom *Rivalry distracts* that they will know their fate as soon as they visit the graves. This [verse] serves as a threat from Him to them.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Aṭiyya—Qays—Ḥajjāj—al-Minhāl—Zirr—ʿAlī said, "We used to have doubts about the punishment of the grave until

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found in the *Sunans* of Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī; the *Musnads* of Tayālisī and Ibn Ḥanbal; the Qur'ānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; and books by Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, Ṭabarānī and al-Ḥākim; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:658.

2 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is only found here and in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:659.

3 One of the early Muslim theological debates was over the reality of the interrogation and punishment of the grave (*ʿadhāb al-qabr*) prior to Resurrection Day. The expression "punishment of the grave" does not appear anywhere in the Qur'ān, although it is found in many *hadiths* and Muslim creedal works.

these verses came down: *Rivalry distracts you* through *No indeed, but you will come to know* about the punishment of the grave."

Ibn Humayd—Ḥakkām b. Salm—ʿAnbasa—Ibn Abī Laylā—al-Minhāl—Zirr—ʿAlī (r) said, "*Rivalry distracts you* came down concerning the punishment of the grave."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Ḥakkām—ʿAmr—al-Ḥajjāj—al-Minhāl b. ʿAmr—Zirr—Alī (r) said, "We continued to have doubts about the punishment of the grave until *Rivalry distracts you until you visit the graves* came down."

INTERPRETATION OF *No indeed, but you will come to know*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) uses the word *kallā* to mean: "It is not like this that you should act, [allowing] rivalry to distract you". Then God (Majestic is His praise) says: *But you will come to know*, when *you visit the graves*, O you whom rivalry has distracted, the consequences of your actions and of allowing your preoccupation with rivalry in the temporal world to neglect acts of obedience to your Lord.

Q. 102:3–5

INTERPRETATION OF *Again, no indeed, but you will come to know*

He says: *Again*, you should not act like this, [allowing] rivalry over wealth and family size to distract you. *But you will come to know* when *you visit the graves* the detested things which await you, when you visit them, on account of your preoccupation with mutual rivalry [instead of] obeying your Lord.

God repeated His statement *no indeed, but you will come to know* twice because when the Arabs wish to frighten and threaten [someone] emphatically, they repeat their statement twice.[1]

The following has been reported to us about this verse on the authority al-Ḍaḥḥāk from:

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Abū Sinān—Thābit—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "*No indeed, but you*, the disbelievers, *will come to know*; *Again, no indeed, but you*, the believers, *will come to know*," and this is how he recited it.

INTERPRETATION OF *No indeed, would that you knew with certain knowledge*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: O humanity, you should not act like this, [allowing] rivalry to distract you. O humanity, *would that you*

1 A similar statement appears in al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, 3:287.

knew with certain knowledge[1] that God will resurrect you on Resurrection Day from your graves after your death, [then] you would not have allowed your rivalry to distract you from obeying God, your Lord, and you would have hastened to worship Him and heed His commands and prohibitions, and [you would] have rejected the temporal world out of fear for your souls of His punishment.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *No indeed, would that you knew with a certain knowledge*, "We were informed that *certain knowledge* is [for man] to know that God will resurrect him after his death."

INTERPRETATION OF *For you will behold Hellfire*

Q. 102:6-8

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of this verse. Most of the reciters of the garrison cities read *la-tarawunna Hellfire* with a *fatha* on the *tā'*, except for Kisā'ī, who read it with a *damma* on the *tā'* the first time (*la-turawunna*) and with a *fatha* on it the second time (*la-tarawunna*).[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct reading, in our estimation, is with a *fatha* in both cases because of the consensus of the evidence in favour of it. On the basis of this reading, the interpretation of the verse would be: O polytheists, *you will behold Hellfire* on Resurrection Day; *again, you will behold it* with eyes that will not doubt it at all.

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Again, you will behold it with the eye of certainty*, "Meaning the polytheists [will do so]."

INTERPRETATION OF *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*

He says: Then God (Mighty and Majestic is He) will interrogate you about *the comforts* you enjoyed in the temporal world. [He will say,] "What did you do while you were in a state of comfort and how did you arrive at it? For what purpose did you use [these comforts], and what did you do with them?"

1 Ṭabarī discusses thoroughly the grammatical complications of the expression *ʿilm al-yaqīn* in his commentary on Sūra 56:95, which has been translated above.

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya identifies Ibn ʿĀmir as reading this verse the same way as Kisā'ī; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:519.

The interpreters disagreed over the nature of these *comforts* (*naʿīm*).

OPINION: Some of them said: They are security and [good] health.

An account of those who said that:

Abbād b. Yaʿqūb—Muḥammad b. Sulaymān—Ibn Abī Laylā—Shaʿbī—Ibn Masʿūd said, concerning His statement *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "[And they are] security and health".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Ḥafṣ—Ibn Abī Laylā—Shaʿbī—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd].

Alī b. Saʿīd al-Kindī—Muḥammad b. Marwān—Layth—Mujāhid said, concerning *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "Security and health".

Ibn Bashshār—Abū ʿĀṣim—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, "It has reached me, concerning His statement *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, [that it refers to] security and health."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh—ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh said, "I heard Shaʿbī say, '*The comforts* about which [we will] be asked on Resurrection Day are security and health.'"

Q. 102:8

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from [Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Khālid al-Zayyāt—Ibn Abī Laylā—ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī—Ibn Masʿūd.

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, concerning *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "Security and health".

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the meaning of that is: Then they will be interrogated on that day about all that God has bestowed upon them and given them, such as hearing, sight and a healthy body.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "The comforts are healthy bodies, hearing and sight. God will ask the servants about how they used them, even though He is more knowing than they are of how they were used, on account of His statement, *Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart— each of these will be asked* (Q.17:36)."

Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā al-Fazārī—ʿUmar b. Shākir—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] used to say, concerning *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "[Meaning] hearing, sight and a healthy body".

OPINION: Others said: This is wellness (*ʿāfiya*).

An account of those who said that:

ʿAbbād b. Yaʿqūb—Nūḥ b. Darrāj—Saʿd b. Tarīf—Abū Jaʿfar said, concerning *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "[Meaning] wellness".

OPINION: Others said: Rather, what is meant by that is some of what a person eats or drinks.

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Bukayr b. ʿAtīq said, "I saw Saʿīd b. Jubayr being given a honey drink, which he drank, saying, 'This is *the comfort* about which you all will be asked.'"

ʿAlī b. Sahl al-Ramlī—al-Ḥasan b. Bilāl—Ḥammād b. Salama—ʿAmmār b. Abī ʿAmmār said, "I heard Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh say, 'When the Prophet (ṣ), Abū Bakr and ʿUmar came to us, we fed them moist dates and gave them water to drink, leading the Messenger of God[1] (ṣ) to say, "These are among *the comforts* about which you will be asked [on Resurrection Day]."'"[2]

Q. 102:8

Jābir b. al-Kurdī—Yazīd b. Hārūn—Ḥammād b. Salama—ʿAmmār b. Abī ʿAmmār said, "I heard Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh say, 'The Prophet (ṣ) came to us…'" and then he related a similar report.

Al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Ṣudāʾī—al-Walīd b. al-Qāsim—Yazīd b. Kaysān—Abū Ḥāzim—Abū Hurayra said,

> Once when Abū Bakr and ʿUmar (r) were sitting, the Prophet (ṣ) came and said, "What is making you sit here?" "Hunger," they replied. [The Prophet] said, "By the One Who has sent me with the truth, nothing other [than hunger] can force me out [of my house]." So, [all three of them] set off until they came to a house belonging to one of the Helpers, whose wife greeted them. The Prophet (ṣ) said to her, "Where is So-and-so?" She said, "He left to fetch water for us." Then the owner of the house came, carrying his water-skin, and said, "Welcome! There is no superior visitor to these servants [of God] than those who have visited today!" Then he hung up his water-skin on the stump of a palm branch and set off, returning with a raceme [of dates].

1 The narrator of this report refers to Muḥammad initially as "the Prophet" yet calls him "the Messenger of God" the second time.

2 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Sunan* of Nasāʾī, the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh, and Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-īmān*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:661.

> The Prophet (ṣ) said, "Were you not just gathering fruit?" He replied, "I would like you to choose for yourselves." Then he took a large knife and the Prophet (ṣ) said, "Look out, do not [slaughter] a she-camel that produces milk!" Yet he slaughtered it for them that day and they ate it. The Prophet (ṣ) said, "You will be interrogated about this on Resurrection Day—how hunger drove you from your homes, and you did not return until this happened to you. This is among *the comforts*."[1]

Abū Kurayb—Yaḥyā b. Abī Bukayr—Shaybān b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿUmayr—Abū Salama—Abū Hurayra said, "The Prophet (ṣ) said to Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, 'Set out with us to Abū'l-Haytham b. al-Tayyihān al-Anṣārī,' and so they all went to him together, and he took them to the shade of his garden and spread out [mattresses] for them. Then he went to a date palm and brought them a bunch of dates. The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'Did you not select for us the moist ones?' He replied, 'I want you to choose from the ripe and fresh ones.' They ate and drank water and when the Messenger of God (ṣ) finished, he said, 'These—by the One in Whose hand is my soul!—are among *the comforts* about which you will be asked on Resurrection Day—this cool shade, cool moist dates and, on top of them, cool water.'"

Q. 102:8

Sālih b. Mismār al-Marwazī—Ādam b. Abī Iyās—Shaybā—ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿUmayr—Abū Salama b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Abū Hurayra—the Messenger of God (ṣ) said a report just like the preceding one, except that he said in his narration "cool shade, cool moist dates and cool water".

ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā al-Bazzāz—Saʿīd b. Sulaymān—Ḥashraj b. Nubāta—Abū Nuṣayra[2]—Abū ʿAsīb, *mawlā* of the Messenger of God, said,

> The Prophet (ṣ) passed by one night and called to me, so I went out to him. Then he passed by Abū Bakr and called to him, so he went out to him. Then he passed by ʿUmar, and then the Messenger of God (ṣ) set out[3] until he entered an enclosed garden belonging to some (or one) of the Helpers. He said to the owner of the

1 According to Suyūṭī, Abū Hurayra's *ḥadīth* is also found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim; the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Nasāʾī and Ibn Māja; and the Qurʾānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:662.

2 Following the editors of the Dār Hajar edition, who substitute Nuṣayra for Baṣīra; 24:607.

3 Most of the preceding clauses are missing from the Ḥalabī edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; see Dār Hajar, 24:607 (note 3).

garden, "Nourish us with some fresh dates." The man came with a raceme of dates and placed it in front of them. The Messenger of God (ṣ) and his Companions ate and then asked for some cool water, which they drank. Then he said, "You will be interrogated about this on Resurrection Day." ʿUmar took the raceme and struck the ground with it until the fresh dates fell off of it. Then he said, "O Messenger of God, will we be asked about this?" He replied, "Yes, except for a morsel of bread which wards off hunger or a little nook into which people enter to escape the heat and cold."[1]

Q. 102:8

Saʿīd b. ʿAmr al-Sakūnī—Baqiyya—Ḥashraj b. Nubāta—Abū Nuṣayra—Abū ʿAsīb, *mawlā* of the Messenger of God (ṣ), said, "The Prophet (ṣ) passed by me and called me, so I went out to him. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar (r) were with him. He entered an enclosed garden belonging to some (or one) of the Helpers and was brought a raceme of fresh dates from it, which was placed in front of him. He and his Companions ate it and then asked for some cool water, which they drank. Then he said, 'You will be interrogated about this on Resurrection Day.' ʿUmar said, 'About this on Resurrection Day?' to which [the Prophet] said, 'Yes, [everything] except for three things: a cloak to cover one's private parts; a morsel of bread which wards off hunger; and a little nook into which people enter to escape the heat and cold.'"

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—al-Jurayrī—Abū Nuṣayra said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) and some of his Companions ate a little bit of non-sifted barley bread with animal fat and then drank from a creek. [The Prophet] then said, 'This is food from among *the comforts*—you will be asked about it on Resurrection Day.'"[2]

Mujāhid b. Mūsā—Yazīd—Muḥammad b. ʿAmr—Ṣafwān b. Sulaym—Maḥmūd b. Labīd said, "When *Rivalry distracts you* came down and [the Prophet] recited it until he reached the verse *on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, the people said, 'O Messenger of God, about which *comforts* will we be asked? Are they the two black things—water and dates—when our swords are on our shoulders and the enemy is present?'

1 According to Suyūṭī, Abū ʿAsīb's *hadith* is found also in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Mardawayh's Qurʾānic commentary, and books by Ibn ʿAdī, Baghawī, Ibn Manda, Ibn Asākir and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:663.
2 Following the reading of this report in the Dār Hajar edition; 24:608.

He said, 'Truly this is what will come to be.'"[1]

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī] and al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Ṣudāʾī—Shabāba b. Sawwār—Abd Allāh b. al-ʿAlāʾ Abū Zabr al-Shāmī—al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Arzam—Abū Hurayra said: the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Truly the first of *the comforts*, about which the servant will be asked on Resurrection Day, is 'Did We not make your body healthy and quench your thirst with cool water?'"[2]

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Layth—Mujāhid said: Abū Maʿmar ʿAbd Allāh b. Sakhbara said, "Nobody wakes up in Kufa except that they are blessed. Those with the lowest living standards eat wheat bread, drink water from the Euphrates, seek shade from the shade [of the trees]—all of these things are among *the comforts*."

Ibn Humayd—Mihrān—Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith al-Tamīmī—Thābit al-Bunānī—the Prophet (ṣ) said, "*The comforts* about which one will be asked on Resurrection Day are a morsel of [bread] which nourishes him, some water which quenches his thirst and a garment which conceals his body."[3]

Q. 102:8

[Ibn Humayd]—Mihrān—Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh—Bishr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Yasār said, "I heard one of the Yemenis say, 'I heard Abū Umāma say, "*The comforts* about which one will be asked on Resurrection Day are wheat bread and pure water."'"

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Bukayr b. ʿAtīq al-Āmirī said, "Saʿīd b. Jubayr was brought a honey drink and said, 'Is this not among *the comforts* about which we will be asked on Resurrection Day—*Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*?'"

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Bukayr b. ʿAtīq [said that] Saʿīd b. Jubayr was brought a honey drink and said, "This is among *the comforts* about which you will be asked."

OPINION: Others said: [The *naʿīm*] are every thing in the temporal world from which a human derives pleasure.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b.

1 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found also in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; Ibn Mardawayh's Qurʾānic commentary; and books of Ibn Abī Shayba, Hannād al-Sarī and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:661.
2 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is also found in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī; the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān; the Qurʾānic commentaries of ʿAbd b. Humayd and Ibn Mardawayh; Ibn Ḥanbal's *Zuhd*, and Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-imān*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:661.
3 According to Suyūṭī, this *mursal hadith* is found only in Ṭabarī's commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:661.

Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "About every pleasurable thing in this world."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning His statement *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "Truly God (Mighty and Majestic is He) will ask each servant about every delightful thing He has bestowed upon him."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *Then, on that day, you will be interrogated about the comforts*, "Truly God (Exalted is His remembrance) will ask each possessor of a delightful thing about what He has bestowed upon him."

Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] and Qatāda both said, "The son of Adam will not be asked about three things and everything other than these things will be subjected to question and accountability, save what God wills. [These three things are] a garment which covers his genitals, a morsel [of bread] which strengthens his loins and a house which shelters him."[1]

Q. 102:8

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that is that one should say: Truly God has informed us that He will ask these people about *the comforts*, without specifying in His statement that He will be asking them about one type of comfort to the exclusion of other types. Rather, He leaves this statement unspecified, so that it includes everything. Therefore, He will ask them, as He says, about all of *the comforts*, and not just some [of them] to the exclusion of others.

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Takāthur

[1] A very similar report, ascribed to the Prophet without an *isnād*, is found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:288.

THE DISBELIEVERS
SŪRAT AL-KĀFIRŪN
(Q. 109:1–6)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[109:1] *Say: O disbelievers!* [109:2] *I worship not that which you worship;* [109:3] *Nor worship you that which I worship.* [109:4] *And I shall not worship that which you have worshipped.* [109:5] *Nor will you worship that which I worship.* [109:6] *To you belongs your religion, and to me, my religion.*[1]

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says [this] to His Prophet, Muḥammad (ṣ), when the polytheists among his people, as has been mentioned, proposed to him that they would worship God for one year if the Prophet of God (ṣ) would worship their deities for one year. God sent down His clear response to them concerning this [proposal]: *Say*, O Muḥammad, to these polytheists who have asked you to worship their deities for a year in exchange for them worshipping your god for a year, *O disbelievers* in God, *I worship not that which you worship*, among your deities and idols, right now, *Nor worship you that which I worship* right now. *And I shall not worship* in the future *that which you have worshipped* in the past. *Nor will you* ever *worship* in the future *that which I worship* right now and in the future.

The meaning is like this only because God was informing the Messenger of God (ṣ) of what to say to his immediate contemporaries, among the polytheists. God knew that they would never believe, because His knowledge of this preceded their actions, so He commanded His Prophet (ṣ) to make [the polytheists] abandon their hopes of achieving what they desired and proposed for him to do this because

[1] Ṭabarī understands the Arabic word *dīn* ("religion") to mean "obedience and humility" (Dār Hajar, 6:273–5), which is how I have rendered it in my translation of his commentary above on Q.3:18, which cites Q.3:19: *Truly obedience and humility, according to God, is submission (to Him)*. A more accurate rendering of the verse *lakum dīnukum wa-liya'l-dīn*, at least from Ṭabarī's perspective, might be "To you, your [way] of obedience and humility, and for me, my [way] of obedience and humility."

it would never happen—neither from [the Prophet's] side nor from [the polytheists'] side, at any time in the future. God also made the Prophet (ṣ) abandon his desire of ever making them believe and achieve success [in the Hereafter] because [He knew] these people would never achieve success, nor accomplish anything, prior to the time some of them were killed by the sword at the battle of Badr, or perished prior to this [event] in a state of disbelief.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that, and [Prophetic] reports have also come to us to this effect. An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ḥarashī—Abū Khalaf—Dāwūd—ʿIkrima—Ibn ʿAbbās said,

> Some of the Quraysh promised to give the Messenger of God (ṣ) wealth, which would make him the richest man in Mecca, and to give to him in marriage any of their women whom he wished, and they would walk after him [out of respect].[1] They said to him, "This is what we offer you, O Muḥammad. Desist from vilifying our deities and do not speak ill of them. If you do not do this, we will offer you a single stipulation, and it is good for both you and us." [The Prophet] said, "And what is it?" They said, "You will worship our deities—al-Lāt and al-ʿUzzā—for one year, and we will worship your God for one year." [The Prophet] said, "I must see what my Lord brings me concerning this," and the revelation came from the Preserved Tablet: *Say: O disbelievers* (the [entire] sūra). God also sent down *Say: Do you bid me worship other than God? O you fools!* (until His statement) *Nay, but God must you worship, and be among the thankful!* (Q.39:64–6).[2]

Q. 109:1–5

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Muḥammad b. Isḥāq—Saʿīd b. Mīnā, the *mawlā* of Bakhtarī, said, "Walīd b. al-Mughīra, ʿĀṣ b. Wāʾil, Aswad b. al-Muṭṭalib and Umayya b. Khalaf all met with the Messenger of God (ṣ) and said, 'O Muḥammad, come let us worship what you worship, and let you worship what we worship, so that we can partner in all of our matters together. If what you have brought is better that what we

1 Literally, "They would tread on his heels"; for the meaning of this expression, see Lane, "ق-ف".
2 According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found also in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's Qurʾānic commentary and a book by Ṭabarānī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:692. It is also found in *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. VI*, 106–7.

have right now, we will have partnered with you in it and will take our portion. And if you find that what we have is better than what you have, you will have partnered with us and can take your portion of that.' Then God sent down *Say: O disbelievers* (through to the end of the *sūra*)."[1]

INTERPRETATION OF *To you belongs your religion, and to me, my religion*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: *To you belongs your religion* (*dīnukum*), which you will never abandon because this [fate] has been sealed upon you. [God] decreed that you will not forsake it and that you will die adhering [to your religion]. *And to me, my religion*, to which I adhere and will never abandon, because this [outcome] has already taken place in God's preternal knowledge, [namely,] that I will never leave [Islam] for another [religion].

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement *To you belongs your religion, and to me, my religion*, "[This was said] to the polytheists." He said, "The Jews only worship God and do not associate anything with Him, although they do reject some of the Prophets along with that which they brought from God. They also reject the Messenger of God, along with that which he brings from God. They killed some of the Prophets unjustly and maliciously, except for a small group, which remained until the time Nebuchadnezzar came forth. Then they said, "ʿUzayr is the son of God' (Q.9:30), while still calling out to God and not worshipping [ʿUzayr].[2] However, they did not go as far as the Christians have done, who say, 'The Messiah is the son of God,' and worship him [as God]."

Q. 109:6

One of the experts in the Arabic language[3] would say: His statement *I worship not that which you worship* and what follows is repeated for the effect of emphasis, just as it is said *Truly with hardship is ease, truly with hardship is ease* (Q.94:5–6) and *For you will behold Hellfire; again, you will behold it with the eye of certainty* (Q.102:6–7).

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Kāfirūn

1 A similar report appears in Guillaume, 165; and *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. VI*, 107.
2 There exists uncertainty among scholars as to identity of 'Uzayr, who typically is understood to be the Prophet Ezra. Most Muslim exegetes consider only the Jews of Medina to have believed that he was the son of God. For more on this controversy, see Asad, *The Message of the Qurʾān*, 262–3; Viviane Comerro, "Esdras est-il le fils de Dieu?" *Arabica*, 52:2 (2005): 165–81.
3 This is the opinion of al-Farrāʾ, who discusses it in his commentary on Sūrat al-Takāthur (102); *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:288.

AID
SŪRAT AL-NAṢR
(Q. 110:1–3)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[110:1] *When God's aid and the victory come* [110:2] *And you see humanity entering the religion of God in waves,*[1] [110:3] *Then glorify the praises of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness. Lo! He is ever ready to accept repentance.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): O Muḥammad, *When God's aid and the victory*—the victory of Mecca—*come* to you, against your Qurayshī brethren, *and you see humanity*—different groups of Arabs and their tribes, such as the people of Yemen and the tribes of Nizār—*entering the religion of God*; He says: *Entering the religion of God* with which He sent you, and the obedience to which He has summoned them, *in waves*, meaning "throngs", wave after wave, [*then glorify the praises of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness*].

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said what we said concerning His statement *When God's aid and the victory come*:

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Waraqā' [b. ʿUmar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *When God's aid and the victory come*, "The victory of Mecca".

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement *When God's aid and the victory come*, "[This is] the aid at the time when God granted victory to [Muḥammad] and helped him."

Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā—al-Ḥusayn b. ʿĪsā al-Ḥanafī—Maʿmar—Zuhrī—Abū Ḥāzim—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "When the Messenger of God (ṣ) was in Medina, he said, 'God is Greatest, God is Greatest, *God's aid and the victory* [*have*] *come*, the people of Yemen have come.' Someone said, 'O

1 See the preceding note on Q.109:6 for a discussion regarding how Ṭabarī understands the word *dīn* ("religion") present in this verse.

Messenger of God, what are the people of Yemen like?' He replied, 'They are a people with soft hearts and gently obedient.[1] Faith is Yemeni; understanding (*fiqh*) is Yemeni; and wisdom is Yemeni.'"[2]

Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—Masrūq—ʿĀ'isha said,

> The Messenger of God (ṣ) would say frequently "Glory to God and [I begin] by praising Him," and "I seek forgiveness of God and I turn to Him in repentance." So I said, "O Messenger of God, I see that you say frequently 'Glory to God and [I begin] by praising Him,' and 'I seek God's forgiveness and I turn to Him in repentance.'" [The Prophet] said, "My Lord has informed me that I will see a sign in my community and when I do see it, I should say frequently 'Glory to God and [I begin] by praising Him,' and 'I seek God's forgiveness and I turn to Him in repentance.' I have seen that [this sign] is *When God's aid and the victory*, meaning the victory of Mecca, *come, and you see mankind entering the religion of God in waves, then glorify the praises of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness. Lo! He is ever ready to accept repentance.*"[3]

Q. 110:2

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from:

[1] [Sufyān] b. Wakīʿ—ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—Masrūq—ʿĀ'isha—the Prophet (ṣ).

[2] Ibn al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Wahhāb—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—Masrūq—ʿĀ'isha said, "The Prophet of God (ṣ), prior to his death, would say frequently…" (and then she related the same *ḥadīth*).

[3] Isḥāq b. Shāhīn—Khālid—Dāwūd—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī]—Masrūq—ʿĀ'isha—the Prophet (ṣ).

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—ʿIkrima said, "Once *When God's aid and the victory come* came down, the Prophet (ṣ) said, '*God's aid* has come; *the victory* has come; the people of Yemen have come!' People said, 'O Prophet of God, what are the people of Yemen like?' He replied, 'They are a people with

1 Following the Dār Hajar reading of *tā'atuhum* instead of the Ḥalabī reading of *tibā'uhum*, 24:706 (note 1).

2 See the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* for detailed references to this "weak" *ḥadīth*, 24:706.

3 According to Suyūṭī, ʿĀ'isha's *ḥadīth* is found also in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abī Shayba, and the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:699.

soft hearts and gently obedient. Faith is Yemeni and wisdom is Yemeni."

As for the meaning of *afwājan* (*in waves*), we have already mentioned the interpreters' opinions concerning it previously.[1]

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning [*Entering*] *the religion of God afwājan*, "Throng after throng".

INTERPRETATION OF *Then glorify the praises of your Lord*

He says: Glorify your Lord and magnify Him with His praises and gratitude to Him for fulfilling His promise to you. Now, at this time, you will be joining Him, and [you soon] will be tasting death, as have the Messengers who preceded you.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

Q. 110:3

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Habīb—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās [said] that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r) asked [a group] about the meaning of God's statement, *When God's aid and the victory come*, and they replied, "[It refers to] the conquest of cities and fortresses." Then ʿUmar said, "What is your opinion, O Ibn ʿAbbās?" "I said, 'It is a similitude that was coined for Muḥammad (s) in which his own [imminent] death was announced to him.'"

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās [said] that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r) was sitting close to him when ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. ʿAwf] said, "[Why do you always sit with him?] We have many sons like him." ʿUmar said, "You know why [I am sitting with him]." ʿUmar then asked him about the meaning of God's statement *When God's aid and the victory come* and Ibn ʿAbbās replied, "[This refers to the Prophet's] death. God informs him of this." ʿUmar said, "I do not know any other [interpretation] save that it is similar to [the interpretation] you know."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿĀṣim—Abū Razīn—Ibn ʿAbbās said: ʿUmar (r) said, "What is this about, meaning *When God's aid and the victory come*?" Ibn ʿAbbās recited *When God's aid and the victory come* until he reached *and seek His forgiveness* and said, "[This means that] 'You [Muḥammad] will be dying [soon].' *Lo! He is ever ready to accept*

[1] Ṭabarī does not add very much to what he has here in his commentary on the only other verse in which the plural *afwāj* occurs; see his commentary on Q.78:18 (not included in this translation). The word *fawj* occurs in the singular in Q.27:83, 38:59 and 67:8.

repentance." Umar said, "We do not know of any other [meaning] save what you have said."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿĀṣim—Abū Razīn—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "At the time *When God's aid and the victory come* came down, the Prophet knew he had received the news of his own death. It was said to him, *When God's aid and the victory come* (until the end of the *sūra*)."

Abū Kurayb and [Sufyān] b. Wakīʿ—Ibn Fuḍayl—ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʾib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "At the time *When God's aid and the victory come* came down, the Messenger of God (s) said, 'I have received the news of my own death, as if I will pass away this year.'"[1]

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father ['Aṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *When God's aid and the victory come*, "This is when [God] announced to him the news of his [impending] death." [Ibn ʿAbbās] said, "When *you see mankind entering the religion of God in waves*, means '[When you see] the masses convert to Islam, your appointed time will arrive; *then glorify the praises of your Lord, and seek forgiveness of Him. Lo! He is ever ready to accept repentance*.'" Q. 110:3

Abūʾl-Sāʾib and Saʿīd b. Yaḥyā al-Umawī—Abū Muʿāwiya—al-Aʿmash—Muslim—Masrūq—ʿĀʾisha said, "Just prior to his death, the Messenger of God (s) would say frequently, 'Glory to You, O God, and [I begin] by praising You! I seek Your forgiveness and I turn to You in repentance.' I said, 'O Messenger of God, what are these words, which I notice you repeatedly saying?' He said, 'A sign has been made for me in my community and when I saw it, I said [these expressions]. [That sign is] *When God's aid and the victory come*' (until the end of the *sūra*)."

Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Masʿūdī—my father—his father—his grandfather—al-Aʿmash—Muslim—Masrūq said: ʿĀʾisha said, "Ever since this *sūra* [beginning] *When God's aid and the victory come* came down to him, I have not heard the Messenger of God (s) recite it without saying prior to it, 'Glory to You, my Lord, and [I begin] by praising You! O God, forgive me!'"[2]

[1] According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is found also in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal and the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:696–7.

[2] According to Suyūṭī, this *ḥadīth* is only found in Ṭabarī's commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:699. However, according to the Dār Ḥajar editors, it is found also in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Bukhārī and Muslim, and the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, 24:710.

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Wakī—Ibn Numayr—al-Aʿmash—Muslim—Masrūq—ʿĀ'isha—the Prophet (ṣ).

Ibn Wakī—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Abū'l-Ḍuḥā—Masrūq—ʿĀ'isha said, "The Messenger of God would say repeatedly, in his bowings and prostrations [in prayer], 'Glory to You, O God, and [I begin] by praising You! O God, forgive me!' [In other words,] he is explaining the Qur'ān."[1]

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Dāwūd—Shaʿbī (Dāwūd said, "I only know of this report from Masrūq, and he probably said:") on the authority of Masrūq—ʿĀ'isha said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) would say frequently 'Glory to God and [I begin] by praising Him! I seek God's forgiveness and I turn to Him in repentance.' I said to him, '[Why] are you saying this so frequently?' He replied, 'My Lord has informed me that I will see a sign in my community and He commanded me to glorify Him by His praises and seek His forgiveness—*Lo! He is ever ready to accept repentance*—when I see this sign. I have seen it: *When God's aid and the victory come*.'" Q. 110:3

Abū'l-Sā'ib—Ḥafṣ—ʿĀṣim—Shaʿbī—Umm Salama said, "The Messenger of God (ṣ) would neither stand nor sit at the end of his life, nor would he come or go, without saying, 'Glory to God and [I begin] by praising Him!' I said, 'O Messenger of God, you really say, "Glory to God and [I begin] by praising Him!" very frequently. You neither come nor go, nor stand nor sit, without saying, "Glory to God and [I begin] by praising Him!"'" He said, 'I have been commanded to do this,' and then he recited *When God's aid and the victory come* (until the end of the *sūra*)."[2]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Salama—Ibn Isḥāq—some of his companions—ʿAṭāʾ b. Yasār said, "The entire *sūra* beginning with *When God's aid and the victory come* came down in Medina after the victory of Mecca and the entry of many people into the religion [of Islam]. [With it, God] brought [the Prophet] the news of his own [impending] death."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Jarīr—Mughīra—Ziyād b. al-Ḥuṣayn—Abū'l-ʿĀliya said, "At the time *When God's aid and the victory come* came down, the Prophet (ṣ) received the news of his own [impending] death, and he would not rise from a session in which he was sitting without saying, 'Glory to You, O God, and [I begin] by praising You! I testify that there is no god except You. I seek Your forgiveness and to You I turn in repentance.'"

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—al-Ḥakam b. Bashīr—ʿAmr said, "At the time *When God's aid and the victory come* came down, the Prophet (ṣ) would say frequently 'Glory to You, O God, and [I begin] by praising You! O Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance—*Truly You are the One Who accepts repentance, the Merciful* (Q.2:128)."'

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda recited the entire *sūra* beginning with *When God's aid and the victory come* and Ibn ʿAbbās said, "This *sūra* is a sign and a mark of distinction by which God distinguished His Prophet (ṣ) and announced his own death. In other words, [it means] 'Truly you will not live after [the revelation of] this [*sūra*] except for a short while.'" Qatāda said, "By God! [The Prophet] did not live after this except for a short while—two years—before he (ṣ) passed away."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Muʿādh ʿĪsā b. Yazīd—Abū Isḥāq—Abū Ubayda—Ibn Masʿūd said, "At the time *When God's aid and the victory come* came down, [the Prophet] would say frequently 'Glory to You, O God, and [I begin] by praising You! O God, forgive me! Glory to You, my Lord, and [I begin] by praising You! O God, forgive me—Truly You are the One Who accepts repentance, the Forgiving!'"[1]

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, concerning God's statement *When God's aid and the victory come*, "This *sūra* was a sign of the [impending] death of the Messenger of God (ṣ)."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning God's statement *and seek His forgiveness. Lo! He is ever ready to accept repentance*, "[God] is saying: Know that you will be dying shortly."

[1] According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found also in the *Sahih*s of Bukhārī and Muslim; the *Sunan*s of Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī and Ibn Māja; the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; the *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq; and the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:699.

[2] According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found only here and in Ibn Mardawayh's Qur'ānic commentary; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:699.

[1] According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found also in the Qur'ānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh, and books by ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Muḥammad b. Naṣr; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:699.

Q. 110:3

INTERPRETATION OF *and seek His forgiveness. Lo! He is ever ready to accept repentance*

He says: And ask [God] to forgive your sins, *innahu kāna tawwābān*. He says: *Lo!* He is oft-returning to His servant, who follows obediently what [God] loves.

The suffix-pronoun *hu* in His statement *innahu* refers to God (Mighty and Majestic is He).

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Naṣr

Q. 110:3

SINCERITY
SŪRAT AL-IKHLĀṢ
(Q. 112:1–4)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[112:1] *Say: He is God, One;* [112:2] *God, the Supreme Master;*[1] [112:3] *He begets not nor was begotten.* [112:4] *And to Him none is comparable.*

It has been alleged that the polytheists asked the Messenger of God (ṣ) about the genealogy of the Lord of Might and so God sent down this *sūra* as a reply to them. [Alternatively], some of the [interpreters] said: Rather, this *sūra* came down as an answer to the Jews, who asked him about [God], saying, "This God created creation, so who created God?" This *sūra* was sent down as a response to them.

OPINION: An account of those who said: This *sūra* was sent down as a reply to the polytheists who asked [the Prophet] to trace for them the genealogy of the Lord (Blessed and Exalted is He).

Aḥmad b. Manī᾽ al-Marwazī and Maḥmūd b. Khidāsh al-Ṭālaqānī—Abū Sa῾d al-Ṣaghānī[2]—Abū Ja῾far al-Rāzī—al-Rabī῾ b. Anas—Abū'l-῾Āliya—Ubayy b. Ka῾b said, "The polytheists said to the Prophet (ṣ), 'Give us the genealogy of your Lord.' So then God sent down *Say: He is God, One; God, the Supreme Master*."[3]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ—al-Ḥusayn—Yazīd—῾Ikrima said, "The polytheists said, 'O Muḥammad,[4] tell us about your Lord. Describe

1 This is Tabarī's interpretation of the *hapax legomenon*, *al-Ṣamad*; see below.

2 Following the reading of the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 24:727.

3 According to Suyūṭī, this *hadīth* is found also in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī, the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim, and books by Ibn Khuzayma, Baghawī and Bayhaqī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:704. (Note that the text is corrupt in this edition; for a more extensive list, see the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.)

4 Following the reading in the Dār Hajar edition. Most manuscripts and editions have "Messenger of God", even though it is highly unlikely that the polytheists would have referred to Muḥammad with this honorific. Suyūṭī indicates that this *mursal* report is unique to Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:704.

your Lord—what is He and of what is He made?' Then God sent down *Say: He is God, One* (through the end of the *sūra*)."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ—Abūʾl-ʿĀliya said, concerning *Say: He is God, One; God, the Supreme Master*, "The leaders of the Confederates (*aḥzāb*) said [to the Prophet], 'Give us the genealogy of your Lord,' and then Gabriel brought him this [*sūra*]."

Muḥammad b. ʿAwf—Surayj—Ismāʿīl b. Mujālid—Mujālid—Shaʿbī—Jābir said, "The polytheists said to the Prophet (ṣ), 'Give us the genealogy of your Lord,' and then God sent down *Say: He is God, One*."

OPINION: An account of those who said: This [*sūra*] came down on account of the questioning by the Jews.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Salama—Ibn Isḥāq—Muḥammad—Saʿīd [b. Jubayr] said,

Q. 112:1

> A group of Jews came to the Prophet (ṣ) and said, "O Muḥammad, this God [of yours] created creation, so who created Him?" The Prophet (ṣ) grew angry to the point that his complexion changed colour. He was about to rush them out of anger on behalf of his Lord when Gabriel (upon him peace) came to him and calmed him down. He said, "O Muḥammad, calm yourself down." Then the answer to their question came to [the Prophet] from God. Thus he said, "God says, *Say: He is God, One*." When the Prophet (ṣ) recited this to them, they said, "Describe your Lord for us—what is His body like? What are His forearms and arms like?" The Prophet became even angrier than he was previously and was about to rush them out of anger when Gabriel came to him and said the same thing and brought him the reply to what [the Jews] had asked him: *And they grasp not God by His proper measure, when the whole earth is His handful on Resurrection Day, and the heavens are rolled in His right hand. Glorified is He and Highly Exalted from all that they ascribe as partner (to Him;* Q.39:67*)*.[1]

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba—Qatāda said, "A group of people from among the Jews came to the Prophet (ṣ) saying, 'Give us the genealogy of your Lord,' and then [the *sūra* beginning with] *Say: He is God, One* to its conclusion came down."

1 This report is found in Guillaume, 270. According to Suyūṭī, this *mursal ḥadīth* is found also in the Qurʾānic commentary of Ibn Abī Ḥātim; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:705.

ṬABARĪ SAID: If the matter is how we have described it, the interpretation of this passage is: *Say*, O Muḥammad, to these people questioning you about the genealogy and description of your Lord, and about who created Him, "The Lord about whom you are inquiring, *He is God*, to whom belongs every being's worship. Worship should not and cannot be directed properly to anything save Him."

The experts in the Arabic language disagreed over why *One* is in the nominative case.

OPINION: One of them said: The nominative case is governed by *God* (*Allāhu*) and that *huwa* is an affirming pronoun equivalent to the letter *hāʾ* in the verse, *Lo! it is I* (*inna*hu *anā*), *God, the Mighty, the Wise* (Q.27:9).[1]

OPINION: Another one of them[2] said: Rather, it is in the nominative case, even though it is indefinite,[3] because it starts a new sentence, such as in the verse [that reads] *and this, my husband, is an old man* (*hādhā baʿlī shaykhun*; Q.11:72). He said: *Huwa Allāh* is the reply to the statement of the people who said, "What is it that you worship?" He said, "*It is God*." Then, when it is said, "What is He?" he replied, "He is *One*."

Q. 112:1

OPINION: Others said: The word *aḥad* (*One*) means *wāḥid* and they rejected [on linguistic grounds] the premise that the affirming pronoun can initiate a new sentence unless one of the "expressions of doubt" precedes it, like [the verb] *ẓanna* ("to think, suppose") and her sisters[4] or *kāna* and her related expressions[5] or *inna* ("truly, verily") or something similar.

ṬABARĪ SAID: This second opinion is the closest to being in agreement with the schools of Arabic grammar.

The Qurʾān reciters disagreed over the reading of these verses. Most of the reciters of the garrison cities read *aḥadun Allāhuʾl-ṣamadu* with nunation (*tanwīn*) on *aḥad*, except for Naṣr b. ʿĀṣim and ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Isḥāq, on whose authority *aḥaduʾllāhu* was read. It is as if those who read it this way said: When nunation is followed by the [definite article] *al-* or consonant letters, it is dropped sometimes, as in the following verse of poetry:[6]

1 Al-Farrāʾ attributes this opinion to Kisāʾī and says "it is worthless"; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:299.

2 This appears to be al-Farrāʾ's opinion; *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:299.

3 The first part of a nominal sentence in Arabic is usually a definite noun, although there are several cases in the Qurʾān in which a nominal sentence begins (or appears to begin) with an indefinite noun.

4 See Wright, 2:48–9.

5 See Wright, 2:15–16.

6 The editor of the Halabī edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* identifies the poet of these verses as ʿUbayd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt; *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 30:344. These verses are found also in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:300. I am grateful for Dr Samy Ayoub's assistance with the translation of this entire passage.

kayfa nawmī ʿalā'l-firāshi wa-lammā
tashmali'l-shāma ghāratun shaʿwā'u

tudhhilu'l-shaykha ʿan banihi wa-tubdī
ʿan khidāmi'l-ʿaqīlatu'l-ʿadhrā'u

How can I sleep on this bed while
a hostile raid is spreading all across Syria—

Causing the old man to neglect his sons,
and the bashful, chaste girls to reveal their anklets.

The intended reading of the poet is *ʿan khidāmin al-ʿaqīlatu*.[1]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in our estimation, regarding that is [to read *aḥadun* instead of *aḥadu*] with nunation for two reasons. First, it is the more eloquent form of speech, the better known, and considered superior among the Arabs. Secondly, there is the agreed-upon proof among the Qur'ān reciters of the garrison cities that they chose the reading with nunation. This alone is sufficient evidence for the soundness of this reading, and there is no need for further evidence in its support. We have already clarified the meaning of His statement *aḥad* (*One*) earlier in this book, in a sufficent manner that renders unnecessary its repetition at this place.[2]

Q. 112:2

INTERPRETATION OF *God, the Supreme Master*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says: The One Who is worshipped and is the only One Who can be worshipped correctly is *al-Ṣamad*.

The interpretaters disagreed over the meaning of *al-Ṣamad*.[3]

OPINION: Some of them said: He is the One Who is not hollow and neither eats nor drinks.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Aswad—Muḥammad b. Rabīʿa—Salama b. Sābūr—ʿAṭiyya—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is not hollow."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is solid and is not at all hollow."

1 The nunation on *khidām* ("anklets") is missing because it is followed by the definite article.
2 See Ṭabarī's commentary on Q.2:163 (not included in this translation).
3 Modern translators of the Qur'ān have wrestled with this word. Here is a sample of their efforts: "eternally Besought of all" (Pickthall); "eternal, absolute" (Yusuf Ali); "everlasting refuge" (Arberry); "the eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Being" (Asad); and "the eternal" (Abdel Haleem).

An identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Manṣūr—Mujāhid.

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. Umar]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is solid and does not have any hollowness."

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī] and Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is not at all hollow."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ; and Ibn Humayd—Wakīʿ and Mihrān together—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid.

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—al-Rabīʿ b. Muslim—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is not at all hollow."

[Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī]—al-Rabīʿ b. Muslim—Ibrāhīm b. Maysara said, "Mujāhid sent me to Saʿīd b. Jubayr to ask him about *al-Ṣamad* and he said, '[Meaning the] One Who is not at all hollow.'"

Q. 112:2

Ibn Bashshār—Yaḥyā—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Shaʿbī said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who does not eat any food."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid—Shaʿbī said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who does not eat any food or drink any beverage."

Abū Kurayb and Ibn Bashshār—Wakīʿ—Salama b. Nubayṭ—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is not at all hollow."

Abū Kurayb—Ibn Abī Zāʾida—Ismāʿīl—ʿĀmir [al-Shaʿbī] said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who does not eat any food."

Ibn Bashshār and Zayd b. Akhzam—Ibn Dāwūd—al-Mustaqīm b. ʿAbd al-Malik—Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who does not have any intestines."

[Anonymous]—al-Ḥusayn [b. al-Faraj]—Abū Muʿādh [al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Marwazī]—ʿUbayd [b. Sulaymān]—al-Ḍaḥḥāk said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is One Who is not at all hollow."

Al-ʿAbbās b. Abī Ṭālib—Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Rūmī—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Saʿīd, al-Aʿmash's walking assistant[1]—Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥayyān—ʿAbd Allāh b. Burayda—his father said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is not at all hollow." (Ibn Burayda said, "I only know of my father elevating this report to the Prophet")

1 Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-Aʿmash (d. 148/765), a famous Kufan *Ḥadīth* scholar and Qur'ān reciter, was, as his nickname indicates, nearly blind.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Bishr b. al-Mufaḍḍal—al-Rabīʿ b. Muslim said, "I heard al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] say, '*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is not at all hollow.'"

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—ʿIkrima said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who is not at all hollow."

OPINION: Others said: [*Al-Ṣamad*] is the One from Whom nothing comes out.

An account of those who said that:

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Abū Rajāʾ said, "I heard ʿIkrima say, concerning *al-Ṣamad*, 'He is the One from Whom nothing comes out, Who *neither begets nor was begotten*.'"

Ibn Bashshār—Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar—Shuʿba—Abū Rajāʾ Muḥammad b. Yūsuf—ʿIkrima said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One from Whom nothing comes out."

OPINION: Others said: He is the One Who *begets not nor was begotten*.

Q. 112:2

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ—**Abū'l-ʿĀliya** said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who *begets not nor was begotten* **because** nothing begets without leaving an inheritance in the future and **nothing** is born which does not ultimately die. Yet God (Exalted is His remembrance) informs them that He neither leaves an inheritence nor dies."

Aḥmad b. Manīʿ and Maḥmūd b. Khidāsh—Abū Saʿd al-Ṣaghānī said, "The polytheists said to the Prophet (ṣ), 'Give us the genealogy of your Lord,' and then God sent down *Say: He is God, One; God, the Supreme Master. He begets not nor was begotten; and to Him none is comparable*. He did so because nothing begets which does not ultimately die and there is nothing which dies except that it leaves behind an inheritance. Truly God (Majestic is His praise) does not die and does not leave an inheritance. *And to Him none is comparable*, meaning nothing resembles or is equal to Him: and *naught is as His likeness* (Q.42:11)."

Abu Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Abū Maʿshar—Muḥammad b. Kaʿb said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the One Who *begets not nor was begotten*; *and to Him none is comparable*."

OPINION: Others said: He is the Master (*sayyid*), Whose power is insurpassable.

An account of those who said that:

Abū'l-Sāʾib—Abū Muʿāwiya—al-Aʿmash—[Abū Wāʾil] Shaqīq said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the Master, Whose power is insurpassable."

Abū Kurayb, Ibn Bashshār and Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—Wakīʿ—al-Aʿmash—

Abū Wāʾil said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the Master, Whose power is insurpassable." (Neither Abū Kurayb nor Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā mentioned "Whose power" [in their narrations].)

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—al-Aʿmash—Abū Wāʾil.

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the Master Whose power is perfect; the Noble One Whose nobility is perfect; the Tremendous One Whose glory is perfect; the Clement Whose clemency is perfect; the Self-sufficient Whose self-sufficiency is perfect; the Compellor Whose compulsion is perfect; the Knowing Whose knowledge is perfect; and the Wise Whose wisdom is perfect. He is the One Who is perfect in [all] the varieties of nobility and power. He is God (Glorified is He) and this is His description, which cannot be ascribed [to anyone] save Him."

OPINION: Others said: Rather, [*al-Ṣamad*] is the Permanent (*al-Bāqī*) Who never vanishes. Q. 112:

An account of those who said that:

Bishr [b. Muʾādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda and al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *Say: He is God, One; God, the ṣamad. He begets not nor was begotten*, "He is the Permanent One after His creatures. This *sūra* is exclusively dedicated to God, as there is no mention of anything related to the temporal world or the Hereafter in it."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*Al-Ṣamad* is the Eternal (*al-Dāʾim*)."

ṬABARĪ SAID: [The word] *al-ṣamad* is used by the Arabs to mean: "The chief to whom all affairs are directed and above whom there is no one."[1] This is also what they call their notables, as can be seen in this verse of poetry:

> *alā bakkara'l-nāʿī bi-khayray Banī Asad*
> *bi-Amri 'bni Masʿūdin wa-bi'l-sayyidi'l-ṣamad*
>
> Alas, in the morning, came the death-announcer, [naming] Banū Asad's two best ones—

[1] This passage and the following verses of poetry are found in Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, 2:216. These verses are translated in Hamza et al., *An Anthology of Qurʾanic Commentaries*, 508.

ʿAmr ibn Masʿūd, the supreme chief.

Also, consider the hemisitich of al-Zibriqān:

...wa-lā rahinata illā sayyidun ṣamadu

...There is no [greater] ransom than a supreme chief

ṬABARĪ SAID: If this is how it is, then the most likely interpretation of this word is the meaning that is widely known in the language of those people in whose language the Qur'ān came down.[1] Were the *ḥadīth* from Abū Burayda, on the authority of his father, sound, [the first opinion] would have been the most sound interpretation, because the Messenger of God (ṣ) was the most knowledgeable person of what God (Majestic is His praise) means and of that which He sent down to him.

INTERPRETATION OF *He begets not nor was begotten*

Q. 112:3-4

He says: He does not pass away to nothingness because there is nothing which begets save that it passes away to nothingness and perishes, *nor was [He] begotten*. He was not brought into existence from non-existence, because everything which is begotten is made to exist after it had not existed and comes into being after it previously had been non-existent. Rather, He (Exalted is His remembrance) is eternal (*qadīm*),[2] everlasting, perpetual (*dā'im*). He never perishes, never ceases and never passes away to nothingness.

INTERPRETATION OF *And to Him none is comparable*

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of this verse.

OPINION: Some of them said: The meaning of that is: "nothing resembling or comparable to Him exists."

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ—Abū'l-ʿĀliya said, concerning His statement *And to Him none is kufuwan*, "Nothing resembles or is equal to Him, and *naught is as His likeness* (Q.42:11)."

1 Thus, it appears that Ṭabarī is adopting the fourth interpretation, that *al-Ṣamad* means "Supreme Master (*sayyid*)". Interestingly, this is also one of the two interpretations adopted by the Muʿtazilī Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī; see Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, 2:210.

2 Ṭabarī's use of the word *qadīm* ("eternal") is a direct borrowing of the language of the speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*) of his day, further indicating his familiarity with this discourse and willingness to adopt some of its concepts in his own writings. The editors of the Dār Ḥajar edition gently rebuke Ṭabarī for using this term in reference to God, since it is ascribed to Him neither in the Qur'ān nor in the *Sunna*; see 24:737 (note 3).

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda—Amr b. Ghaylān al-Thaqafī, who was the governor of Basra—Kaʿb said, "Truly God (Exalted is His remembrance) laid the foundation of the seven heavens and seven earths upon this *sūra*: *He begets not nor was begotten; and to Him none is comparable*. Truly nothing in His creation is equal to Him."

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And to Him none is kufuwan*, "*Naught is as His likeness* (Q.42:11), so glory to God, the One, the Subduer!"[1]

Al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. Umar]—Ibn Jurayj said, concerning *And to Him none is kufuwan*, "Similar or equivalent".

OPINION: Others said: The meaning of that is that He does not have a female companion.

Q. 112:

An account of those who said that:

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Abd al-Malik b. Abjar—Ṭalḥa—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *And to Him none is kufuwan*, "A female companion".

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—Yaḥyā—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abjar—Ṭalḥa—Mujāhid; and from Abū Kurayb—Ibn Idrīs—ʿAbd al-Malik—Ṭalḥa—Mujāhid.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abjar—a man—Mujāhid said, concerning *And to Him none is kufuwan*, "A female companion".

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—ʿAbd al-Malik b. Abjar—Ṭalḥa b. Muṣarrif—Mujāhid said, concerning *And to Him none is kufuwan*, "A female companion".

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Abū'l-Sāʾib—Ibn Idrīs—ʿAbd al-Malik—Ṭalḥa—Mujāhid.

The words *kufu'*, *kafi'* and *kifā'* are identical in meaning in the speech of the Arabs[2] for "equivalent" or "resemblance". For example, there is the verse of al-Nābigha of Banū Dhubyān:

lā taqdhifannī bi-ruknin lā kifā'a lahu
wa-law ta'aththafaka'l-aʿdā'u bi'l-rifadi

1 This second clause echoes Q.39:4, *Glory to Him—He is God, the One, the Subduer.*

2 Abū Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2:216.

Reproach me not with a formidable thing, that has no equal;
Even if enemies should group around you, aiding each other,
[inciting you against me].[1]

The meaning of *lā kifā'a lahu* is "that has no equal".

The Qur'ān reciters disagreed over the reading of *comparable*. Most of the Basran reciters read *kufuwan* with *dammas* on the *kāf* and *fā'*, while some of the Kufans read *kuf'an* with a *sukūn* on the *fā'* and a *hamza* above the *wāw*.[2]

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion in this case is to say that they are both well-known readings and widely attested dialects, so the reciter will be correct reading either one of them.

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ

Q. 112:4

1 The first hemistich is found in Lane, "*r-k-n*"; see also Hamza et al., *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, 523.

2 Ibn ʿAṭiyya ascribes the reading of *kufu'* with a *hamza* to Nāfiʿ, al-Aʿraj, Abū Jaʿfar, Shayba, Āṣim and possibly Abū ʿAmr; *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, 5:537. He also notes that Ḥamza read *kuf'an*, with a *sukūn* on the *fā'*.

DAYBREAK
SŪRAT AL-FALAQ
(Q. 113:1–5)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[113:1] *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak* [113:2] *From the evil of that which He created;* [113:3] *And from the evil of darkness when it overspreads,* [113:4] *And from the evil of female blowers on knots,* [113:5] *And from the evil of an envier when he envies.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): *Say*, O Muḥammad, "I seek refuge *in the Lord of the Daybreak (falaq) from the evil of that which He created* among all creatures."

The interpreters disagreed over the meaning of *falaq*.

OPINION: Some of them said: It is a prison in Gehenna that bears this name.

An account of those who said that:

Al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Ṭaḥḥān—ʿAbd al-Salām b. Ḥarb—Isḥāq b. ʿAbd Allāh—someone—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*The falaq* is a prison in Gehenna."

Ibn Bashshār—Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī—ʿAbd al-Salām b. Ḥarb—Isḥāq b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Farwa—a man—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *al-falaq*, "A prison in Gehenna."

Yaʿqūb [al-Dawraqī]—Hushaym—ʿAwwām—ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Khawlānī' said, "One of the Companions of the Messenger of God (ṣ) came to Syria. He looked at the houses of the non-Muslims and their [pleasant] lives and happiness, and the many worldly goods that had been bestowed upon them, and said, 'I do not care [about this], for is not the *falaq* their fate?' It was said to him, 'What is the *falaq*?' He replied, '[It is] a house in Gehenna. When its door is opened, the people of Hellfire will howl (or empty their bowels; *harra*).'"

1 Following the Dār Hajar edition of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; 24:742.

Ibn Bashshār—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, "I heard Suddī say, '*The falaq* is a pit in Gehenna.'"

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from ʿAlī b. [al-]Ḥasan al-Azdī—Ashjaʿī—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Suddī; and from Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Suddī.

Isḥāq b. Wahb al-Wāsiṭī—Masʿūd b. Mūsā b. Mushkān al-Wāsiṭī—Naṣr b. Khuzayma al-Khurāsānī—Shuʿayb b. Ṣafwān—Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qurazī—Abū Hurayra—the Prophet (ṣ) said, "*The falaq* is a covered pit in Gehenna."[1]

Ibn al-Barqī—Ibn Abī Maryam—Nāfiʿ b. Yazīd—Yaḥyā b. Abī Usayd—Ibn ʿAjlān—Abū ʿUbayd said that Kaʿb entered a church and was amazed by its beauty. He said, "Such beautiful work and such misguided people! I am satisfied that the *falaq* is for you." It was said to him, "What is the *falaq*?" He said, "[It is] a house in Gehenna. When it is opened, all of the people of Hellfire shriek on account of the intensity of its heat."

Q. 113:1

OPINION: Others said: [*The falaq*] is one of the names of Gehenna.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Khuthaym b. ʿAbd Allāh said, "I asked Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥubulī about the *falaq* and he said, 'It is Gehenna.'"

OPINION: Others said: *The falaq* is daybreak.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*, "*The falaq* is daybreak."

Ibn Bashshār—Ibn Abī ʿAdī—ʿAwf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning the verse *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*, "*The falaq* is daybreak."

[Ibn Bashshār]—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī]—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sālim al-Afṭas—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "*The falaq* is daybreak."

Nearly identical reports were narrated to us from Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ; and Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān; both Wakīʿ and Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sālim al-Afṭas—Saʿīd b. Jubayr; and from ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Azdī—Ashjaʿī—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Sālim [al-Afṭas]—Saʿīd b. Jubayr.

Abū Kurayb—Wakīʿ—al-Ḥasan b. Ṣāliḥ [b. Ḥayy]—ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAqīl—Jābir said, "*The falaq* is daybreak."

[1] According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found only in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:717.

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Bashshār—Abū Aḥmad—al-Ḥasan b. Ṣāliḥ—ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAqīl—Jābir b. Abd Allāh.

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Abū Ṣakhr—Qurazī would say, concerning this verse *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*, "*He is the Splitter* (*fāliq*) *of the seed and fruit pits* (Q.6:95) and *He is the Cleaver* (*fāliq*) *of the Daybreak* (Q.6:96)."[1]

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—ʿĪsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*, "[Meaning] daybreak".

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, concerning *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*, "*The falaq* is the breaking of the day."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*The falaq* is the breaking of the day."

Q. 113:1

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning God's statement *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*, [when] he was asked, "Does this refer to daybreak?" "Yes." Then he recited *He is the Cleaver of the Daybreak, and He has appointed the night for stillness* (Q.6:96).

OPINION: Others said: *The falaq* means "creation" and the meaning of the sentence is: *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of* creation.

An account of those who said that:

ʿAlī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Muʿāwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*, "[Meaning] creation".

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that is to say: Truly God (Majestic is His praise) commanded His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) to say, *I seek refuge in the Lord of the falaq*. The word *falaq* in the speech of the Arabs means "daybreak". The Arabs say, "It is clearer than daybreak." (They say both *falaq al-ṣubḥ* and *faraq al-ṣubḥ*.)[2] It is possible that there is a prison in Gehenna named "al-Falaq". Therefore, since God (Majestic is His praise) did not provide any indicators that He intended *Lord of the falaq* to refer to some things which are called *falaq* to the exclusion of others, and since God (Exalted is His remembrance) is the Lord of everything He created,

[1] These are the only occurrences of the active participle *fāliq* in the entire Qurʾān.
[2] These two sentences are found in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:301.

it is necessary for the meaning [of this verse] to include everything that is called *falaq*, as He is the Lord of all that.

INTERPRETATION OF *From the evil of that which He created*

God (Majestic is His praise) says this because He commands His Prophet to seek refuge from the evil of every single thing, since everything other than Him is something He created.

INTERPRETATION OF *And from the evil of darkness when it overspreads*

He says: *From* a darkening evil, *when it* enters and comes upon us with its darkness.

The interpreters disagreed over the intended meaning of the darkening [evil] in this verse, from which the Messenger of God (ṣ) was commanded to take refuge.

Q. 113:2–3

OPINION: Some of them said: It is the night as it darkens.

An account of those who said that:

Muḥammad b. Sa'd [b. Muḥammad al-'Awfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Sa'd al-'Awfī]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *And from the evil of darkness when it overspreads*, "The night".

Ibn Bashshār—Ibn Abī 'Adī—'Awf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning His statement *And from the evil of darkness when it overspreads*, "The beginning of the night, when it darkens."

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Abū Ṣakhr—Qurazī would say, concerning *darkness when it overspreads*, "[This is] the daytime, when it enters the night."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—a man from Medina—Muḥammad b. Ka'b [al-Qurazī] said, concerning *And from the evil of darkness when it overspreads*, "It is the sunset, when the night comes and sets."[1]

Muḥammad b. 'Amr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū 'Āṣim [al-Nabīl]—'Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqā' [b. 'Umar]; both 'Īsā and Warqā'—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "The *ghāsiq* (*darkness*) is the night and *idhā waqaba* means: 'When it enters.'"

[Muḥammad] ibn 'Abd al-A'lā [al-Ṣan'ānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Ma'mar—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *And from the evil of darkness when it waqaba*, "The night, when it comes forth."

[1] Following the Dār Hajar emendation to read *wajaba* instead of *waqaba*; 24:746.

Bishr [b. Mu'ādh]—Yazīd [b. Zuray']—Sa'īd [b. Abī 'Arūba]—Qatāda—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *And from the evil of darkness when it waqaba*, "[When] it comes."

Alī [b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ]—Mu'āwiya [b. Ṣāliḥ]—'Alī [b. Abī Ṭalḥa]—Ibn 'Abbās said, concerning *idhā waqaba*, "When it comes forth."

OPINION: Others said: "It is the daylight when it enters the night," and we have already mentioned this.

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—a man from Medina—Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Qurazī said, concerning *And from the evil of darkness when it waqaba*, "It is the sunset, when the night comes and [the sun] sets."

OPINION: Others said: [*The ghāsiq*] is a star, and some of them said: That star is the Pleiades.

An account of those who said that:

Mujāhid b. Mūsā—Yazīd—Sulaymān b. Ḥibbān—Abū'l-Muhazzam—Abū Hurayra said, concerning His statement *And from the evil of a ghāsiq when it overspreads*, "A star". Q. 113:3

Yūnus [b. 'Abd al-A'lā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning *a ghāsiq when it overspreads*, "The Arabs call the setting of the Pleiades *ghāsiq* and [they claimed] that diseases and plagues increased when it sets and disappeared when it rises."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The advocates of this opinion have support from a report on the authority of the Prophet (ṣ) that has been narrated to us from:

Naṣr b. 'Alī—Bakkār b. 'Abd Allāh the brother of Hammām—Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf—his father—Abū Salama [b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf]—Abū Hurayra—the Prophet (ṣ) said, concerning *And from the evil of a ghāsiq when it overspreads*, "The setting star".[1]

OPINION: Others said: "Rather the *ghāsiq when it waqaba* is the moon," and they narrate a report on the authority of the Prophet (ṣ), of which we were informed by:

Abū Kurayb—Waki'; and [Sufyān b. Waki'][2]—his father and Yazīd b. Hārūn; and Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān; all of them—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—

[1] According to Suyūṭī, this *hadith* is found also in the *'Aẓama* of Abū'l-Shaykh al-Iṣbāhānī and the Qur'ānic commentary of Ibn Mardawayh; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:718. Note that the variant Suyūṭī quotes has the additional clause "and it is the Pleiades".

[2] The printed texts have Ibn Sufyān—his father. Yet I think the correct reading is Sufyān b. Waki'—his father; *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 30:352; and 24:748 of the Dār Hajar edition.

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Dhi'b—his maternal uncle, al-Ḥārith b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—Abū Salama b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—ʿĀ'isha said, "The Prophet (ṣ) took my hand, looked at the moon, and said, 'O ʿĀ'isha, seek refuge in God from *from the evil of a ghāsiq when it waqaba*. This is a *ghāsiq when it it is eclipsed*.'" (These are the words of the narrations of Abū Kurayb and Ibn Wakīʿ. Ibn Ḥumayd's narration has the following words: ʿĀ'isha said, "The Prophet (ṣ) took my hand and said, 'Do you know what this is? Seek refuge in God from the evil of this, for this is the *ghāsiq when it is eclipsed*.'")[1]

Muḥammad b. Sinān—Abū ʿĀmir—Ibn Abī Dhi'b—al-Ḥārith b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān—ʿĀ'isha—the Prophet (ṣ) looked at the moon and said, "O ʿĀ'isha, seek refuge in God from the evil of this, for truly this is *the ghāsiq when it is eclipsed*."

Q. 113:4

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct, in my estimation, is for one to say: Truly God commanded His Prophet (ṣ) to seek refuge *from the evil of a ghāsiq*, which is that which darkens. The night *ghasaq/yaghsiqu ghusūqan* when it darkens. The meaning of *idhā waqaba* is: "When it enters into its darkness." When the night enters into its darkness, it is a *ghāsiq*. Also, when a star sets, it is a *ghāsiq*, and the moon is a *ghāsiq* when it is eclipsed. God did not specify some of these meanings; rather, the statement is unspecified and so it includes every *ghāsiq*. The Prophet (ṣ) was commanded to seek refuge in God from its evil when it *waqaba*, which Qatāda says means: "goes forth (*dhahaba*)".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *darkness when it waqaba*, "When it goes forth."

ṬABARĪ SAID: I am not aware of the basis for what Qatāda said, concerning [this meaning of *waqaba*] in the speech of the Arabs; rather, the well-known meaning of *waqaba* in their speech is "to enter (*dakhala*)".

INTERPRETATION OF *And from the evil of female blowers on knots*

He says: *And from the evil of* the sorcerers who blow on knots of thread, when they perform their incantations upon them.

The following interpreters said something similar to what we have just said concerning that. An account of those who said that:

[1] According to Suyūṭī, ʿĀ'isha's *ḥadīth* is also found in the the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī; the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal; the Qurʾānic commentaries of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh; and books by Abū'l-Shaykh and al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī; *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 6:718.

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *And from the evil of female blowers on knots*, "The sorcery that is mixed with amulets."

Ibn Bashshār—Ibn Abī ʿAdī—ʿAwf—al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, concerning *And from the evil of female blowers on knots*, "Male and female sorcerers".

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar said, "Qatāda recited *And from the evil of female blowers on knots* and said, 'Beware of the sorcery that mixes with these amulets!'"

[Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Ṣanʿānī—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Ibn Tāwūs—his father [Ṭāwūs] said, "There is nothing closer to polytheism than the amulets of the mischief-maker (or viper; *hayya*) or insane people."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "When al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] would come across the verse *And from the evil of female blowers on knots*, he would say, 'Beware of that with which sorcery mixes.'" Q. 113:5

Ibn Ḥumayd—Mihrān—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Jābir—Mujāhid and Ikrima said, concerning *female blowers on knots*: Mujāhid said, "These are amulets consisting of knotted thread." ʿIkrima said, "[This refers to] taking [amulets of] knotted thread."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And from the evil of female blowers on knots*, "The *naffāthāt* are sorcerers who use knots."

INTERPRETATION OF *And from the evil of an envier when he envies*

The interpreters disagreed over the *envier* from whose evil envy the Prophet (ṣ) was commanded to seek refuge.

OPINION: Some of them said: This is every envier from whose evil eye and soul the Prophet (ṣ) was commanded to seek refuge.

An account of those who said that:

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, concerning *And from the evil of an envier when he envies*, "From his evil eye and soul."

A similar opinion has been narrated on the authority of ʿAṭā' al-Khurāsānī. Maʿmar said, "I heard Ibn Ṭāwūs—his father said, 'The [evil] eye is a reality, and were anything to precede destiny, the [evil] eye

would have preceded it. So when the person who has been struck by [the evil eye] asks to wash [the person possessing the evil eye], let him wash [him].'"[1]

OPINION: Others said: Rather, the Prophet (ṣ) was ordered by this verse to seek refuge from the evil of the Jews who envied him.

An account of those who said that:

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *And from the evil of an envier when he envies*, "[It refers to the] Jews. Nothing prevents them from believing in [Muḥammad] except their envy."

ṬABARĪ SAID: The opinion regarding that which is most likely to be correct is that the Prophet (ṣ) was commanded to seek refuge from the evil of every envier when he envies, whether he reproaches him or casts a spell on him or desires evil for him. We only say that this is the most likely opinion to be correct because God (Mighty and Majestic is He) does not specify one envier to the exclusion of another one in the verse *And from the evil of an envier when he envies*. Instead, He commands him to seek refuge from the evil of every envier in a general manner, since this is its general meaning.

Q. 113:5

Conclusion of the commentary on Sūrat al-Falaq

[1] For a detailed discussion of this report and the ritual washing to cure the evil eye, see Lane, "*gh-s-l*" (Form X).

PEOPLE
SŪRAT AL-NĀS
(Q. 114:1–6)

COMMENTARY ON THE FOLLOWING DIVINE WORDS:

[114:1] *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of people,*[1] [114:2] *The King of people,* [114:3] *The God of people,* [114:4] *From the evil of the sneaking whisperer,* [114:5] *Who whispers in the hearts of people,* [114:6] *Among (both) the jinn and people.*

God (Exalted is His remembrance) says to His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): *Say*, O Muḥammad, I seek refuge *in the Lord of people, the King of people.* He is the King of all creation, both its humans and jinn, and everything else. [God] informs the person, whom people glorify in the same manner by which the believers glorify their Lord, that He is the King of this glorified person. All of this is part of His dominion, under His authority, and His power flows through it. [Thus, God informs us] that He is more deserving of glorification and worship than those people who are glorified and worshipped.

INTERPRETATION OF *The God of people*

He says: He is the people's object of worship, to Whom worship is directed, to the exclusion of everything other than Him.

INTERPRETATION OF *From the evil of the sneaking whisperer*

This means: *From the evil* of the *khannās* satan who sometimes hides himself and sometimes whispers. [Indeed] whenever the servant remembers and mentions his Lord, he [the satan] hides himself (*yakhnisu*).

An account of those who said that:

Abū Kurayb—Yaḥyā b. ʿĪsā—Sufyān [al-Ṯawrī]—Ḥakīm b. Jubayr—

[1] I have generally translated *al-nās* as "humanity"; but in this short *sūra*, the word "people" seems better suited to its meaning and rhythm.

Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "No one has been born without there being a whisperer upon his heart. When he thinks and remembers God, [the whisperer] hides himself, but when he is negligent, he whispers. This is the meaning of His statement *the khannās whisperer*."

Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Manṣūr—Saʿīd[1]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning *the sneaking whisperer*, "[This refers to] the satan who reclines on the heart of the son of Adam. When man is negligent and heedless, he whispers, and when man remembers God, he hides himself."

[Ibn Ḥumayd]—Mihrān—ʿUthmān b. al-Aswad—Mujāhid said, concerning *the sneaking whisperer*, "[The satan] expands and then, when God is remembered, he contracts. Then, when [man] is heedless, he expands [again]."

Muḥammad b. ʿAmr [al-Bāhilī]—Abū ʿĀṣim [al-Nabīl]—Īsā [b. Maymūn]; and from al-Ḥārith [b. Abī Usāma]—al-Ḥasan [b. al-Ashyab]—Warqāʾ [b. ʿUmar]; both ʿĪsā and Warqāʾ—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, concerning His statement *the sneaking whisperer*, "A satan is on the heart of man, and when man remembers God, he conceals himself." Q. 114:4

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*The whisperer* is the satan who is also *khannās*, since he hides himself whenever the servant remembers God. He both whispers and conceals himself."

Bishr [b. Muʿādh]—Yazīd [b. Zurayʿ]—Saʿīd [b. Abī ʿArūba]—Qatāda said, "*From the evil of the sneaking whisperer*, meaning the satan who whispers in the chest of the son of Adam and hides himself when [man] remembers God."

[Muḥammad] ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā [al-Ṣanʿānī]—[Muḥammad] ibn Thawr—his father said, "It was mentioned to me that the satan (or he said *the whisperer*) whispers into the heart of man when he is sad or happy, but hides himself whenever he remembers God."

Yūnus [b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā]—Ibn Wahb—Ibn Zayd said, concerning His statement *the khannās*, "The *khannās* is the one who sometimes whispers and sometimes conceals himself from the jinn and humans. It has been said that the human-satan is more difficult for humans [to bear] than the jinn-satan, because the jinn-satan whispers but you cannot see him, whereas the other one can be seen [when he whispers]."

Furthermore, it has been narrated to us that Ibn ʿAbbās would say, "*From the evil of the whisperer* who whispers invitations to obey him, in

[1] Following the emendation of the Dār Hajar edition; 24:754 (note 2).

the chests of humans, to the point that they are heeded. Then, when his invitations are heeded and his suggestions are obeyed, he hides himself."

An account of the narration of that:

Muḥammad b. Saʿd [b. Muḥammad al-ʿAwfī]—my father—my uncle [al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan]—my father—his father [ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd al-Awfī]—Ibn ʿAbbās said, concerning His statement *the whisperer*, "He is the satan who commands [the person]; and when he is obeyed, he hides."

TABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion regarding that, in my estimation, is that one should say: Truly God (Exalted is His remembrance) commanded His Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) to seek refuge in Him from the evil of the satan who sometimes whispers and at other times conceals himself. God did not specify one type of whispering among the many types, nor does He specify one type of hiding to the exclusion of others. [Such a satan] whispers with invitations to disobey God—and when he is obeyed, he hides—and he also whispers [in an effort] to forbid one from obeying God. Whenever the servant remembers the command of his Lord and obeys it, while disobeying the satan, he [the satan] hides. Such [a satan] is always in one of the two states of whispering or hiding, and this description is his description. Q. 114:5-6

INTERPRETATION OF *Who whispers in the hearts of people*

What is meant by this is the whispering satan *who whispers in the hearts of people*, both jinn and humans (*insān*).

QUESTION: How can the jinn be called "a people (*nās*)", such that one says "*who whispers in the hearts of people, among (both) the jinn and people?*"

RESPONSE:[1] In this context, God calls the jinn "a people" just as He calls them "men (*rijāl*)" in the verse, *And indeed men among humankind used to invoke the protection of men among the jinn* (Q.72:6). God calls jinn "men" in this verse, and He calls them "people" here.

It has been alleged that one of the Arabs said, while telling a story, "When a group of jinn came and halted, it was said to them 'Who are you?' and they replied 'Some people (*nās*) from the jinn.'" So he designated some of them as "a people", and it is likewise in [God's] revelation too.

[Conclusion of the commentary on verses 1–6 of Sūrat al-Nās]

Conclusion of the Book of Commentary

All praise belongs to God, the Most High, the Most Great

[1] This entire response is found, in a slightly different arrangement, in al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 3:302.

APPENDIX A
THE DISCONNECTED LETTERS
(*Muqaṭṭaʿāt*)

COMMENTARY ON VERSE I OF SŪRAT AL-BAQARA (THE COW)

The Qur'ān commentators disagreed over the interpretation of God's statement (Exalted is His remembrance) ***Alif Lām Mīm***.[1]

OPINION: Some of them said: It is one of the names of the Qur'ān.

Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā—ʿAbd al-Razzāq—Maʿmar—Qatāda said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* is one of the names of the Qur'ān."

Al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī—Abū Ḥudhayfa Mūsā b. Masʿūd—Shibl—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "***Alif Lām Mīm*** is one of the names of the Qur'ān."

Al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan—al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd—Ḥajjāj—Ibn Jurayj said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* is one of the names of the Qur'ān."

OPINION: Some of them said: These are opening [expressions] by which God opens [some *sūras* of] the Qur'ān.

Hārūn b. Idrīs al-Aṣamm al-Kūfī—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Muḥāribī—Ibn Jurayj—Mujāhid said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* are opening [expressions] by which God opens [some *sūras* of] the Qur'ān."

Aḥmad b. Ḥāzim al-Ghifārī—Abū Nuʿaym—Sufyān [al-Thawrī] said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* are opening [expressions]."

Al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm—Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj—Yaḥyā b. Ādam—Sufyān [al-Thawrī]—Ibn Abī Najīḥ—Mujāhid said, "*Alif Lām Mīm*, *Ḥā' Mīm*, *Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād*, and *Ṣād* are opening [expressions] by which God opens [some *sūras*]."

[1] Twenty-nine *sūras* open with anywhere between one to six "disconnected letters" which are not part of a word. These letters have elicited tremendous speculation among Muslims and non-Muslims; see "Kur'an," *EI²*. For a modernist Muslim interpretation of these letters, see Appendix II of Asad's *The Message of the Qur'ān*. For an account of Orientalist speculation on this topic, see Arthur Jeffery, "The Mystic Letters of the Koran," *The Moslem World*, 14 (1924): 247–60.

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Al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan—al-Ḥusayn—Ḥajjāj—Ibn Jurayj—Mujāhid said something nearly identical to the report of Hārūn b. Idrīs.

OPINION: Others said: This is a name of the *sūra*.

Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā—ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb said, "I asked ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam about the meaning of *Alif Lām Mīm. This is the Book*... and *Alif Lām Mīm. A revelation*... (Q. 32:1) and *Alif Lām Mīm Rā'. These*... (Q. 13:1) and he replied, 'My father said, "These are only the names of the *sūras*."'"

OPINION: Some of them said: It is God's Greatest Name.

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī—Shuʿba said, "I asked Suddī about the meaning of *Hā Mīm*, *Ṭā' Sīn Mīm* and *Alif Lām Mīm* and he replied, 'Ibn ʿAbbās said, "It is God's Greatest Name."'"[1]

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā—Abū'l-Nuʿmān—Shuʿba—Ismāʿīl al-Suddī—Murra al-Hamdānī—ʿAbd Allāh [b. Masʿūd].

Al-Muthannā [al-Āmulī]—Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj—ʿUbayd Allāh b. Mūsā—Ismāʿīl—Shaʿbī said, "The *sūra* openings are among the Names of God."

OPINION: Some of them said: It is an oath by which God swears and it is among His Names.

Yaḥyā b. ʿUthmān b. Ṣāliḥ al-Sahmī—ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ—Muʿāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ—ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "This is an oath by which God swears and it is among the Names of God."

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Khālid al-Ḥadhdhā'—ʿIkrima said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* is an oath."

OPINION: Some of them said: These are disconnected letters from nouns and verbs, and each letter has a meaning that is different from the other letter.

Abū Kurayb and Sufyān b. Wakīʿ—Wakīʿ—Sharīk—ʿAṭā' b. al-Sā'ib—Abū'l-Ḍuḥā—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* means 'I, God, know [best] (*anā'llāhu aʿlam*).'"

Anonymous—Abū ʿUbayd—Abū'l-Yaqẓān—ʿAṭā' b. al-Sā'ib—Saʿīd b. Jubayr said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* means 'I, God, know [best] (*anā'llāhu aʿlam*).'"

Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Hamdānī—ʿAmr b. Ḥammād al-Qannād—Asbāṭ b. Naṣr—Ismāʿīl al-Suddī, in a report he mentioned from Abū Mālik and Abū Ṣāliḥ—Ibn ʿAbbās; and from Murra al-Hamdānī—Ibn Masʿūd; a

[1] Note that Suddī never met Ibn ʿAbbās.

group of Companions of the Prophet (ṣ) said, "*Alif Lām Mīm* is an expression derived from the letters of the alphabet, which make up the Names of God (Majestic is His praise)."

Muḥammad b. Maʿmar—ʿAbbās b. Ziyād al-Bāhilī—Shuʿba—Abū Bishr—Saʿīd b. Jubayr—Ibn ʿAbbās said, "*Alif Lām Mīm*, *Ḥā' Mīm* and *Nūn* are noun fragments."[1]

OPINION: Some of them said: These are letters of a posited alphabet.[2]

Anonymous—Manṣūr b. Abī Nuwayra—Abū Saʿīd al-Muʾaddib—Khuṣayf—Mujāhid said, "The *sūra* openings, all of them—*Qāf*, *Ṣād*, *Ḥā' Mīm*, *Ṭā' Sīn Mīm*, *Alif Lām Rā'*, and others—are letters of a posited alphabet."

OPINION: Some of them said: Each of these letters includes diverse and divergent meanings.

Al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarī—Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj—ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Jaʿfar al-Rāzī—my father—al-Rabīʿ b. Anas said, concerning *Alif Lām Mīm*, "These letters, among the twenty-nine Arabic letters, are the ones around which all languages revolve. There is not one letter save that it is the key to one of His Names. There is not one letter save that it is among His bounties and His trials. There is not one letter save that it is a time period for a people and their appointed times. Jesus the Son of Mary said, 'It is amazing that people speak about His Names and live by His sustenance—so how can they disbelieve?' The letter *Alif* is the key to His Name *Allāh*; the letter *Lām* is the key to His Name The Kind (*al-Laṭīf*); and the *Mīm* is the key to His Name The Glorious (*al-Majīd*). The *Alif* is the bounties (*ālā'*) of God; the *Lām* is God's grace (*luṭf*); and the *Mīm* is His glory (*majd*). The *Alif* is one year; the *Lām* is thirty years; and the *Mīm* is forty years."

A nearly identical report was narrated to us from Ibn Ḥumayd—Hakkām—Abū Jaʿfar—al-Rabīʿ [b. Anas].

OPINION: Some of them said: They are letters which are to be used according to their assigned numerical values (*ḥisāb al-jummal*).

ṬABARĪ SAID: We dislike mentioning the person from whom this inter-

[1] Arabic: *ism muqaṭṭaʿ*. Cooper translates this as "acronyms;" *Commentary*, 84.

[2] Arabic: *ḥurūf hijā' mawḍūʿ*. I am following Cooper's helpful discussion of this expression: "The sense of the Tradition quoted by Ṭabarī would seem to be that certain letters were posited by God to convey meanings, and thus form a kind of symbolic alphabet; however, nothing more than this can be said, because these meanings are not known and have not been explained." See *Commentary*, 84 and 89 (note 2).

pretation is reported, because the people who narrate it are not reliable narrators and transmitters.[1] A corresponding report has just been presented on the authority of al-Rabīʿ b. Anas.

OPINION: Some of them say that every book has a secret, and the secret of the Qur'ān is its opening letters.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The grammarians also disagreed over the meaning of these letters.

SOME GRAMMARIANS SAID: These are letters of the alphabet and the mention of these letters at the opening of the *sūras* makes it unnecessary to mention the remaining letters of the alphabet, the total number of which is twenty-eight letters. Likewise, it is sufficient for the speaker, from whom it has been made known that the alphabet consists of twenty-eight letters, to mention just *alif bāʾ tāʾ thāʾ* without mentioning the remaining letters of the alphabet.[2] It is for this reason that *This is the Book* (Q. 2:2) is in the nominative case, because the meaning of this sentence is "*Alif, Lām* and *Mīm* are among the disconnected letters. *This is the Book* which I revealed to you as a [unified] collection,[3] *in which there is no doubt.*"

OBJECTION: [Is it not the case] that *alif bāʾ tāʾ thāʾ* have become akin to a proper name for the alphabet, just as the Opening of the Book (Q. 1) is called "All praise"?[4]

RESPONSE: Since it is permissible to say "My son is among *ṭāʾ ẓāʾ*," when it is obvious by that statement, were he to say it, that he intends [to make] a declarative statement about his son's [name] consisting of these disconnected letters, then it is obvious that *alif bāʾ tāʾ thāʾ* is not a proper name [for the alphabet], even though many people choose to call it by these letters instead of by other ones.[5]

The reason for the discrepancy in indicating the alphabet between

1 Despite this caveat, Ṭabarī relates this report in his discussion of these interpretations below. The report is transmitted via Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī, a transmitter with a very poor reputation, whom Ṭabarī, in general, seeks to avoid, at least in his Qur'ānic commentary (as discussed in the Translator's Introduction).

2 These are the first four letters of the Arabic alphabet; the English equivalent is saying "the ABC's" instead of "the alphabet."

3 Notice how Ṭabarī, in his commentary, weaves in an almost poetic contrast between the "disconnected letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*)" and the "[unified] collection (*majmūʿ*)" of the Qur'ān, that is absent from the actual Qur'ānic text.

4 It has long been common practice for Muslims to refer to the first *sūra* by the first word following the *basmala*, which is *al-ḥamd* ("all praise").

5 I am grateful for Dr Adel Gamal's assistance with this passage.

the *sūra* openings, in which [the alphabet is indicated by] different letters that are out of sequence, and by means of the initial letters of the alphabet—*alif bāʾ tāʾ thāʾ*—in their correct sequence is the following: When one indicates the alphabet with letters that are out of sequence, then one has indicated intentionally a word composed of connected letters; but when one mentions the letters in [alphabetical] sequence, then one has indicated intentionally the disconnected letters of the alphabet themselves. In order to provide evidence that it is permissible for someone to say "My son is among *ṭāʾ ẓāʾ*" and similar things, and that his clear statement takes the place of him saying "My son is among *alif bāʾ tāʾ thāʾ*," they cite the following verses of *rajaz* poetry from the tribe of Asad:

lammā raʾaytu amrahā fī ḥuṭṭī
wa-fanakat fī kadhibin wa-laṭṭī
akhadhtu minhā bi-qurūnin shumṭin
fa-lam yazal ṣawbī bihā wa-maʾtī
ḥattā ʿalāʾl-raʾsa damun yughaṭṭī

When I saw that her affair was with the ḥuṭṭī,
And that she persisted in lies and denial,
I seized her by the black and grey locks of her hair;
My pulling and dragging [her hair] continued,
Until blood covered the top of her head.

ṬABARĪ SAID: He claimed that the speaker intended to make a statement that the woman is among the Abū Jād, and that he put "I saw that her affair was with the *ḥuṭṭī*" in the place of "with the Abū Jād." When he says this, it is clear to the listener that the intended meaning is "When I saw that her affair was with the Abū Jād."

SOME GRAMMARIANS SAID: Rather, the reason why these *sūras* began with these letters was to catch the ears of the polytheists [of Muḥammad's day], who had been urging each other to oppose the Qur'ān, so that they would listen to the words of the Qur'ān that immediately follow these letters.

SOME GRAMMARIANS (OR ONE OF THEM) SAID: These are [meaningless] letters by which God opens His speech.[1]

QUESTION: Are there any parts of the Qur'ān that are devoid of meaning?

1 This passage, including the verses of poetry and their explanations, is found in al-Akhfash, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, 1:170–1. It does not appear to reflect al-Akhfash's personal opinion.

RESPONSE: The correct understanding of this [last] opinion is that God uses these letters to open His speech in order to indicate that the *sūra* prior to it has concluded and that He has begun another one. So God uses these letters as a sign of the division between the two *sūras*. There is evidence for this practice in the speech of the Arabs, as a man from among them recited the following verse of poetry,

bal wa-baldatin mā'l-insu min āhālihā

[I swear] by a land devoid of any human inhabitants.

The following has also been said:

lā bal mā hāja ahzānan wa-shajwan qad shajā

He was not disturbed by sorrows or grief which had manifested.

The word *bal* in both cases is neither part of the verse nor counted in the meter. Rather, it serves to cut off one sentence and to indicate that a new sentence begins immediately following it.[1]

There is a well-known way to justify each of the preceding people's opinions we have presented regarding [the disconnected letters].

There are two ways to justify the opinion of the people who said that *Alif Lām Mīm* is one of the names of the Qur'ān:

[1] They intended *Alif Lām Mīm* to be a name of the Qur'ān, just as the *Furqān* ("the Criterion") is one of its names. If this interpretation is followed, then the interpretation of *Alif Lām Mīm* in the passage *Alif Lām Mīm. This is the Book* has the meaning of an oath, as if one were to say "By the Qur'ān, This (*hadhā*) *is the Book, in which there is no doubt.*"

[2] They intended this to be a proper name of a *sūra*, just as all things are known by their proper names. The listener who hears someone say "Today I recited *Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād*, and *Nūn*" understands that this person recited *sūras* [7 and 68] of the Qur'ān, just as he understands, when a person says "Today I met up with ʿAmr and Zayd," that he met up with a [specific] Zayd and ʿAmr.

OBJECTION: [What] if the meaning of that was ambiguous for someone, leading him to say: How can this second interpretation be permissible, given that multiple *sūras* begin with *Alif Lām Mīm* and *Alif Lām Rā*? If these were truly proper names, then they would distinguish clearly between individuals; and if they did not distinguish between them, then they would not be proper names.

1 This is the conclusion of the passage found in al-Akhfash's *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*.

RESPONSE: Consider how many people share the same name, such that it does not distinguish them fully, except by the addition of something else, such as a genealogy, adjective or attribute, which serves to distinguish them from everyone else [with the same name]. There is no doubt that their name is still used to distinguish them [from people who do not have this name], and then, out of necessity on account of multiple people sharing this name, additional qualifiers are used to specify this unique person. The same applies for the names of the *sūras*. Each *sūra* has been given a proper name, according to proponents of this position, and, when this name is shared by multiple *sūras*, the speaker must add another name to it in order to distinguish for the listener the exact *sūra* to which he is referring by means of an adjective, attribute or something else. The speaker might say, when informing someone that he recited Sūrat al-Baqara (The Cow, 2) when he has called it by its name of *Alif Lām Mīm*, "I recited *Alif Lām Mīm*, The Cow;" and, to indicate [Sūrat] Āl ʿImrān (The Family of Imrān, 3), "I recited *Alif Lām Mīm*, The Family of ʿImrān." On the other hand, he might choose to say for The Cow, "[I recited] *Alif Lām Mīm. This is the Book*," and for The Family of ʿImrān, "[I recited] *Alif Lām Mīm. God—there is no god but He, the Living, Self-subsisting.*" This is just like the case of someone who, when he wishes to tell a story about two men named ʿAmr, one of whom is from the tribe of Tamīm, while the other one is from the tribe of Azd, then he must specify to his listeners "I met up with ʿAmr al-Tamīmī and ʿAmr al-Azdī," because there is no way to distinguish between them and everyone else who shares the name ʿAmr, except by stating their tribal affiliations. This is how the proponents of the position that the opening letters are names of *sūras* justify their position.

Those who said, "These are opening [expressions] by which God opens [a passage of] the Qur'ān," justify their position in a similar manner to the [third] opinion of the grammarians we mentioned previously, who said that these letters serve to indicate the conclusion of one *sūra* and the beginning of another one. Therefore, they serve as a sign of the division between them, just as the poet used *bal* at the beginning of his poem to indicate that he was commencing a new poem and that the previous one had been concluded. This is like the case we mentioned, in which the Arabs intended to indicate they were starting a new ode:

bal mā hāja ahzānan wa-shajwan qad shajā

He was not disturbed by sorrows or grief which had manifested.

The word *bal* is neither part of the verse nor counted in its meter, but it does serve the purpose of indicating that one discourse has ended and another has begun.

As for those who say that some of these disconnected letters come from God's Names (Mighty and Majestic is He) and others among them come from His Attributes, and that each letter has a meaning that is different from the other letter, they justify their interpretation by means of the poet's statement,

qulnā lahā qifī lanā qālat qāf
lā tahsabī annā nasinā'l-ijāf

We said to her, "Halt for us!" She replied ,"I halted."
[We said], "Do not think we have forgotten how [you] made our [hearts] throb!"[1]

The poet says, "She said *qāf*" in the place of "She said 'I halted (*waqaftu*)'" because she indicated, by means of articulating the *qāf* of *waqaftu*, that her intention was the complete word *waqaftu*.

These folks interpret God's statement ***Alif Lām Mīm*** and corresponding passages in a similar fashion. One of them said that ***Alif*** refers to the *alif* in *anā* ("I"), the *Lām* refers to the *lām* in *Allāh*, and the ***Mīm*** refers to the *mīm* in *aʿlam* ("know [best]"), such that each letter indicates a complete word. They say that the sum of these disconnected letters, when it is clear that each one refers to a complete word, is "I, God, know [best]." They interpret all of the other opening letters to the *sūras* in this manner, saying that it is overwhelmingly clear that, in Arabic speech, the speaker can reduce his words to letters so long as there remain sufficient indicators as to what has been elided, and that likewise he can add letters to what he says so long as they do not confuse the listener. For example, one can drop the final *thā'* of the name Hārith when softening the voice (*tarkhīm*)[2] and say "O Hār;" or drop the *kāf* from Mālik and say "O Māl;" and likewise with similar cases. This is like the *rajaz* verse,

mā liʾl-zulaymi ʿala kayfa lā yā
yanqaddu ʿanhu jilduhu idhā yā

What is with the male ostrich—how it howls?
His skin [nearly] splits open when he does that.

[1] Mahmūd Shākir identified the poet of this verse of *rajaz* as al-Walīd b. ʿUqba; *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 1:212.
[2] See Wright, 2:88–89.

It is as if the intended meaning were "when he does such and such," and so the letter *yā'* is a sufficient indicator of *yafʿalu* ("he does").

Likewise, consider the following:

biʾl-khayri khayrātin wa-in sharrin fā

Good comes with good and if [he does] evil, then [evil he shall receive].

He intends *fā* to mean *fa-sharran* ("then evil"). Consider too:

wa-lā uridu'l-sharra illā an tā

I do not wish for evil unless you so wish [for it].

In other words, *illā an tā* stands for *illā an tashā'a* ("unless you so wish"). In these two latter cases, the *fā'* and *tā'* were sufficient indicators for complete words, without the remaining letters. Were we to document exhaustively similar examples, this book would become too long, as we have been informed by:

Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm [al-Dawraqī]—Ibn ʿUlayya—Ayyūb and Ibn ʿAwn—Muḥammad [b. Sīrīn] said, "When Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya died, ʿAbīda[1] said to me, 'I only see this as civil strife (*kāʾina fitna*), so seek refuge in your estate and stay close to your family.'" [Ibn Sīrīn] said, "What do you command me to do?" He said, "It is preferable to me that you *tā*"—at which point Ayyūb and Ibn ʿAwn put their hands under their right cheeks to indicate lying down in bed (*iḍṭijāʿ*)—"until you see a recognizable situation."

The intended meaning of *tā* is "you lie low," which he took from the word *taḍṭajiʿ*. Likewise, another person said [one can] add letters to words, as we described previously:

aqūlu idh kharrat ʿalaʾl-kalkāli
yā nāqatī mā julti min majāli

I say, when her chest sinks to the ground,
"O my she-camel! You have not yet roamed a full course!"

The intended meaning of *kalkāl* is *kalkal* ("chest").[2]

[1] The Shākir brothers propose emending ʿAbda in the manuscript to ʿAbīda [al-Salmānī], because there is no known contemporary of Ibn Sīrīn in Basra named ʿAbda who would have been senior to him, as the text indicates; *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 1:214. The Muslims' second civil war intensified after the death of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya in 64/683.
[2] Ṭabarī's point here is that the additional *alif* in *kalkāl* does not alter the meaning of *kalkal* and is not even part of the word.

Likewise, another [poet] said,

inna shaklī wa-inna shaklaki shattā
fa'lzamī'l-khuṣṣa wa'khfidi tabyadiḍḍī

[O my wife], my form and your form are different;
So stay in your home of reeds, be at ease and light-skinned
[from staying indoors].

The poet added an extra letter *dād* in *tabyaḍiḍḍī* ("be light-skinned") that is not part of the word.

The proponents of this position said: Just as each of the single letters in these examples of Arabic poetry and speech indicates complete words, the letters *Alif Lām Mīm* and their equivalent passages indicate complete words.

Those folks who advocate the opinion that each letter of *Alif Lām Mīm* and its equivalent passages indicates multiple meanings, as we have narrated from al-Rabīʿ b. Anas, justified their position in a way that is similar to that of the folks who claim that the interpretation [of *Alif Lām Mīm*] is "I, God, know (best)," on the grounds that each letter sufficiently indicates a complete word, so that its remaining letters need not be mentioned. However, they differed over the meaning of each letter, when asked "Does [this letter] refer to the word which the first proponent [of this opinion] claimed or to a different word?" They replied, "Rather, the *Alif* of *Alif Lām Mīm* comes from diverse words and it indicates the meanings of all of them, completely." They said that each letter has been made singular and shorn of the remaining letters of the complete word [from which it is derived], because, were all of the letters of the word present, the word from which some of these disconnected letters were taken would only indicate a single meaning, and not two or more meanings. They continued: [That is the case] when there is no indicator, were all of the letters present, except of a single meaning. However, God (Majestic is His praise) has intended for each letter to indicate many meanings for a single thing, so it is not permissible to understand these single letters except as indicating these multiple meanings, in order that the addressees of God's speech know that God (Mighty and Majestic is He) does not intend a single meaning or single intended object by these letters; rather, He only intends by [the letter] to indicate many things.

These folks said: Therefore, the *Alif* in *Alif Lām Mīm* yields many meanings. It means the complete name of the Lord, which is *Allāh*; the complete word for the bounties of God, which is *ālāʾ*; and it indicates

that the allotted time for a group of people is one year, since the numerical value of the letter *alif* is one. The letter *Lām* yields a complete name of God, which is *al-Laṭīf* (the Kind); the complete noun for His bounty, which is *luṭf* ("grace"); and it indicates that the allotted time for a people is thirty years. The letter *Mīm* yields a complete name of God, which is *al-Majīd* (the Majestic); the complete word describing His greatness, which is *majd* ("majesty"); and it indicates that the allotted time for a people is forty years.

The meaning of this speech, according to the proponents of the first view, is that God (Majestic is His praise) opened His speech by describing Himself as "the Knower from whom nothing is concealed;" and that He does so to set an example and [to illustrate] the way by which His servants can open their orations, epistles and significant affairs; and as a test from Him to them, which, if they pass, will guarantee for them a tremendous reward in the Abode of Recompense. Likewise, God opened [other *sūras*] with the expressions *All praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds* (Q. 1:2) and *All praise belongs to God Who created the heavens and the earth* (Q. 6:1). God opened these and other *sūras* with praise for Himself, just as He used these *sūra*-openings to magnify Himself and glorify Himself, as He says, *Glory to the One Who brought His servant by night* (Q. 17:1), and likewise in all of the corresponding *sūras*. Therefore, just as God opens certain *sūras* with [words of] self-praise, self-magnification, self-glorification and self-abstraction, He does the same with the disconnected letters by which He opens other *sūras*. So sometimes He praises His knowledge, other times He praises His justice and fairness, and other times His bestowal of bounties and goodness. He does this succinctly and in an abbreviated manner, and then He relates the issues at length in what follows these opening passages.

According to this interpretation, the *Alif*, the *Lām* and the *Mīm* would need to be in the nominative case, each [letter being nominative] on account of the other [letter], independent of His statement, *This is the Book*, which is a predicate to an [elided] subject, and is distinct from the meaning of *Alif Lām Mīm*. The proponents of the second of these two opinions under discussion also require that *This* be in the nominative case, each part of the clause governing the other one, although they assign a different meaning to it than do the proponents of the first opinion.

As for those who said, "They are letters among the letters taken according to their numerical value, devoid of any meaning," they said: We know of no other meaning which can be understood from these letters other than their assigned numerical values or that they represent the

act of spelling by someone who says '*Alif Lām Mīm*." They continued: "It is not possible for God (Majestic is His praise) to address His servants by means of expressions except with those they can understand and comprehend. If that is how it is, the expression *Alif Lām Mīm* can only be understood in the two possible ways we have mentioned. One of these ways—that it is intended to be the act of spelling out *Alif Lām Mīm*—is invalid, which means that the only sound and established way of understanding these letters is the other one, which is in accordance with their assigned numerical values. This position is invalid because it is not possible for one to say "*Alif Lām Mīm*" [as if one were spelling a word] and then follow this immediately with the statement *This is the Book* because the [act of spelling] is bereft of meaning and cannot be understood as signifying anything, so if *Alif Lām Mīm* is adjacent to *This is the Book* [it must have some comprehensible meaning].

The proponents of this position also cited as evidence the following report:[1]

> Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī—Salama b. al-Faḍl—Muḥammad b. Isḥāq—[Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib] al-Kalbī—Abū Ṣāliḥ—Ibn ʿAbbās—Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ri'āb said,
>
> Abū Yāsir b. Akhṭab passed by the Messenger of God (ṣ) while he was reciting the opening of Sūrat al-Baqara—*Alif Lām Mīm. This is the Book, in which there is no doubt*—when his brother Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, along with some other Jews, came. He said, "By God! Do you know,[2] I just heard Muḥammad recite among the words God (Mighty and Majestic is He) revealed to him, *Alif Lām Mīm. This is the Book*." They said, "You really heard this?" "Yes," he replied. Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab walked at the front of a group of Jews to the Messenger of God (ṣ) who said, "O Muḥammad, is it true that, among what was revealed to you, you recited *Alif Lām Mīm. This is the Book*?" The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Why yes!" The group of Jews asked, "Did Gabriel bring this to you from God?" "Yes," replied [Muḥammad]. They said, "Prior to you, God (Majestic is His praise) sent Prophets; none of whom, that we know of, were informed by God of the

1 This report is also found in Guillaume, 256–57.
2 Maḥmūd Shākir indicates in the notes that, in the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām and elsewhere, the text has the meaning of "Be aware that…;" *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 1:217.

duration of his dominion nor of the allotted time[1] of his community, save you!" Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab said, while facing those who were with him, "*Alif* equals one; *Lām* equals thirty; *Mim* equals forty; and the sum of these letters is seventy-one. Would any of you enter into the religion of a Prophet whose dominion and allotted time of his community would only last seventy-one years?"

Then he turned to face the Messenger of God (ṣ) and said, "O Muḥammad, do you have anything else like this?" "Yes," he replied. "What?" asked Ḥuyayy. [Muḥammad] said, "*Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād*." Ḥuyayy said, "This is mightier and a longer [duration]! The *Alif* equals one; the *Lām* equals thirty; the *Mim* equals forty; and the *Ṣād* equals ninety. The sum of these letters is 161 years. O Muḥammad, do you have anything else like this?" "Yes," he replied. "What?" asked Ḥuyayy. [Muḥammad] said, "*Alif Lām Rā'*." Ḥuyayy said, "By God! This is mightier and longer! The *Alif* equals one; the *Lām* equals thirty; and the *Rā'* equals 200. The sum of these letters is 231. O Muḥammad, do you have anything else?" "Yes," he replied. "I have *Alif Lām Mim Rā'*." Ḥuyayy said, "By God! This is mightier and longer! The *Alif* equals one; the *Lām* equals thirty; the *Mim* equals forty; and the *Rā'* equals 200. The sum of these letters is 271 years."

Then Ḥuyayy said, "Your affair has confounded us, O Muḥammad. We know not whether you have been given a little or a lot [of time]!" Then the group [of Jews] got up and left [Muḥammad]. Abū Yāsir said to his brother, Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, and the rabbis who were with him, "Who knows? Perhaps the sum of all of these numbers is what lies in store for Muḥammad? [Were we to add] seventy-one plus 161 plus 231 plus 271, we would get 734!" The [group of Jews] said, "His affair has become ambiguous to us!"

Some folk claim that this verse[2] was revealed on account of them: *He it is Who has revealed to you the*

1 Reading *ajal* for *ukl*; see *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 1:217 (notes 3 & 4).
2 The Arabic has the plural form of "these verses," although the quoted passage is part of a single long verse.

Scripture wherein are clear signs—they are the Mother of the Book—and others (which are) ambiguous (Q. 3:7).[1]

The proponents of this opinion said: This report clarifies the soundness of what we have said, concerning the interpretation of [the opening letters], and the invalidity of what those who oppose us have said.

ṬABARĪ SAID: The correct opinion, in my estimation, regarding the interpretation of the opening letters of these *sūras*, is that God (Majestic is His praise) made them disconnected letters and did not connect one of them to the other, which would have made them like all of the other speech that consists of connected letters, because He (Mighty is His remembrance) intended for each letter of His expressions to indicate multiple meanings. [This is] like what al-Rabīʿ b. Anas said, even though he limited the number of meanings to three to the exclusion of all their other meanings, instead of adding [additional meanings] to it.

Therefore, the correct interpretation, in my estimation, is that each letter contains all of the meanings that al-Rabīʿ mentioned, along with all of the remaining meanings that the other commentators said, except for the [first] opinion of the grammarians that I mentioned, who said that these letters at the *sūra* openings merely represent the letters of the alphabet, such that it is unnecessary to mention the remaining twenty-eight letters of the alphabet. Their interpretation [of Q. 2:1–2]—"These are the letters; *This is the Book*, in which they are brought together, *in which there is no doubt*"—is erroneous and invalid because it departs from the opinions of all of the Companions and Successors, and those commentators and interpreters who followed in their footsteps. A sufficient proof of their error, along with the invalidation of it by [all the people] we have mentioned, is their inconsistency in explaining why *This is the Book* is in the nominative case. Sometimes, they say that each word puts its corresponding word in the nominative case; other times they link it to the suffix pronoun in the expression *in which there is no doubt*; and still other times they connect it with *guidance for those who are God-conscious*. All of these grammatical explanations are outside of and do not even consider their alleged interpretation of *Alif Lām Mīm dhālika'l-kitābu*, which they say is "These are the letters; *This is the Book*."

OBJECTION: How is it possible for a single letter to serve as a comprehensive indicator for many differing meanings?

[1] See above for a translation of Ṭabarī's commentary on this important verse.

RESPONSE: This case is no different from that of a single word indicating many differing meanings, such as calling a group of people "an *umma*" or a period of time "an *umma*" or a man who is extremely pious and obedient to God "an *umma*" or a religion and sect (*milla*) "an *umma*." Likewise, one can call requital and retaliation "a *dīn*" or authority and obedience "a *dīn*" or self-abasement "a *dīn*" or [mathematical] reckoning "a *dīn*." There are many corresponding cases to this, in which a single word has many meanings, and cataloguing them exhaustively would unnecessarily lengthen the book. Likewise, God's statements (Majestic is His praise) *Alif Lām Mīm*, *Alif Lām Rā'*, *Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād* and all of the similar cases of letters that serve as the openings to *sūras*. Each letter of these expressions indicates many meanings, inclusive of all of the Names of God (Mighty and Majestic is He) and His Attributes and all of the other opinions ventured by the commentators that we have mentioned. These letters, along with this, are the openings to *sūras*, as the advocate of this opinion has mentioned. The interpretation that these letters are among the Names of God (Majestic is His praise) and His Attributes does not preclude them from being the openings to *sūras*, because God (Majestic is His praise) opens many of the *sūras* of the Qur'ān with Self-praise, Self-glorification and Self-magnification, such that it is not impossible that He would open some of them by [swearing] an oath by them.

One of the meanings of the opening letters, by which some *sūras* begin, is that they are openings by which [God] opened some of the *sūras* of the Qur'ān and that He swore by them, because one of their meanings is that these letters are among the letters of God's Names (Exalted is His remembrance) and His Attributes, as we have previously elucidated. There is no doubt that it is a correct meaning for God to swear by Himself, His Names and His Attributes.

These letters also possess numerical values, and they are indicators and names of the *sūras* they open. All of these interpretations that we have described and the ways of justifying them, which we have clarified, are contained in the meanings of these letters, because had God (Majestic is His praise) intended, by this or something else, these letters to indicate and bear only one of these meanings, to the exclusion of the other [meanings], He would have indicated this clearly to the Messenger of God (ṣ), in an unambiguous manner, since He (Majestic is His praise) sent down His Book to His Messenger (ṣ) in order to clarify for [his listeners] all of the things over which they disagreed. The fact that the Messenger (ṣ) did not leave any clear indicator that God intended some of these interpretations

of the opening letters to the exclusion of others is the clearest evidence that God intended all of these interpretations and the meanings they bear, as long as the interpretation and meaning is not impossible according to reason, just as it is not impossible for a single word or expression to have many meanings.

Those folks who deny our interpretation should be asked to explain what the difference is between these letters and all of the other letters, which form a single word bearing many meanings, like *umma*, *dīn* and equivalent nouns and verbs. They will not be able to affirm one of these [categories] without affirming the other one.

Likewise, each person who interprets these letters in only one of the ways we have described, to the exclusion of other ways, should be asked for the proof that their interpretation must be accepted exclusively. Then they should be presented with a different interpretation and asked what the root difference is between their interpretation and the other interpretation. They will not be able to affirm one of these interpretations without affirming the other one.

As for the person among the grammarians[1] who claimed that the opening letters correspond to word the word *bal* in the poetic verse bal *mā hāja aḥzānan wa-shajwan qad shajā* ("He was not disturbed by sorrows or grief which had manifested"), that they are devoid of meaning, and that they serve merely as a superfluous expression indicating a division, truly he has erred for the following different reasons:

[1] He described God (Exalted is His remembrance) addressing the Arabs in a manner that is not part of their language or any human language. Even though there may be some who open their poem with the word *bal*, it is agreed upon that none of them open their [poetic] speech with *Alif Lām Mīm* or *Alif Lām Rā'* or *Alif Lām Mīm Sād* in the same manner that they use the word *bal*. Once you acknowledge that the Arabs never open their speech in this manner, and that God (Majestic is His praise) addressed them in all of the verses of the Qur'ān in a linguistic manner that they recognized and used themselves, then there is no doubt that the mode (*sabīl*) we have described regarding the opening letters, which are used to open some of the *sūra*s, is [identical to] the mode for the remaining verses of the Qur'ān—God did not use them in any manner that diverged from the recognized linguistic usage of the Arabs, [then you must concede that

1 As was mentioned previously, this opinion is found in al-Akhfash's *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, although he does not ascribe it to anyone.

your interpretation] falls outside of the claim of eloquent speech by which God (Mighty and Majestic is He) described the Qur'ān. He (Exalted is His remembrance) said, [*And lo! it is a revelation of the Lord of the Worlds,*] *which the Trustworthy Spirit has brought down upon your heart, that you may be among the warners, in clear Arabic speech* (Q. 26:192–95).[1] How can God's speech be clear if some of it is unintelligible and incomprehensible to all of the communities, according to the opinion of this grammarian, and is unknown in the speech of any of His creatures? God's declaration (Majestic is His praise) that the Qur'ān is *in clear Arabic* refutes this claim. He informs us that the Arabs understood what He said and that it was perfectly clear. This is one of the ways in which his interpretation is wrong.

[2] The second aspect of his error is to associate God (Majestic is His praise) with addressing His servants by means of useless and meaningless language, which is irrelevant to the meaning whether it is present in or absent from the address. This is associating a form of frivolity to God, which all of the monotheists prohibit associating with Him (Exalted is His remembrance).

[3] The third aspect of his error is [that he made a false comparison between *bal* and *Alif Lām Mīm*]. The word *bal* is an obvious and easily understood word in the Arabic language. It is used in speech to refute a prior statement, such as "Your brother did not come to me, but (*bal*) your father did," or "I did not see ʿAmr; rather, it was ʿAbd Allāh."[2] There are many cases similar to this, such as the verse by al-Aʿshā of Banū Thaʿlaba:

wa-la'ashrabanna thamāniyan wa-thamāniyan
wa-thalātha ʿashrata wa'thnatayni wa-arbaʿā

I shall drink eight and eight
And thirteen, and two and four.

The poet went on like this until he reached his statement,

bi'l-jullasān wa-ṭayyibin ardānuhu
bi'l-wanni yaḍribu li yakurru'l-iṣbaʿā

in a drinking room, with a [singing girl] with perfumed cuffs,
striking cymbals rapidly, for me, with her fingers.

Then the poet said,

bal ʿaddi hādhā fi qariḍin ghayrihi

1 Tabarī only cites verses 193–95; I have included 26:192 for the sake of clarity.
2 Arabic: *mā jā'ani akhūka bal abūka*; and *mā ra'aytu ʿAmran bal ʿAbda'llāh*.

wa'dhkur fatan samḥa'l-khaliqati arwa'ā

No! Leave this for another poem,
And mention an admirable youth of bounteous disposition!

It is as if the poet said, "Leave this and take another poem." The meaning of *bal* in the speech of the Arabs is like its usage in this passage. Since we do not know of anyone among the experts in the Arabic language who claims that *bal* can be used as the opening of a statement in a superfluous or elliptical manner, without any meaning, other than the [grammarian] whose opinion I have mentioned, how then can this meaning [of *bal*] be a basis from which one can make a similarity with the [disconnected] letters that open some of the *sūra*s of the Qur'ān, were they to be compared, when they are so far from resembling [*bal*] in any way?

[*Conclusion of the commentary on the first verse of Sūrat al-Baqara*]

APPENDIX B
ṬABARĪ'S TEACHERS

Ṭabarī narrates at least one report from the following men in the translated selections of his commentary. In the interest of space, I have not listed these narrators' teachers and students, which can be found easily in the sources cited.

Abbreviations of sources:

Gilliot	:	Claude Gilliot, *Exégèse, Langue et Théologie en Islam*
JT	:	Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa'l-ta'dīl*
Mu'jam	:	Akram al-Atharī, *Mu'jam shuyūkh al-Ṭabarī*
Siyar	:	Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*
TB	:	al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām* (= *Tārīkh Baghdād*)
TT	:	Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb fī rijāl al-hadīth*.

Abbreviations of the canonical Sunni *Ḥadīth* collections in which these narrators' *ḥadīth*s are found:

B	:	*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*
M	:	*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
AD	:	*Sunan Abī Dāwūd*
T	:	*Sunan al-Tirmidhī*
N	:	*Sunan al-Nasā'ī*
IM	:	*Sunan Ibn Māja*
Six Books:		All six of these canonical *Ḥadīth* collections.

'ABBĀS B. 'ABD AL-'AẒĪM AL-'ANBARĪ. A Basran *ḥadīth* narrator, whom Abū Ḥātim evaluated as "sincere" and Nasā'ī called "reliable." His *ḥadīth*s are found in M, AD, T, N and IM, and he died in 246/860. (TT 3:390–91)

'ABBĀS B. ABĪ ṬĀLIB. His full name is 'Abbās b. Ja'far b. 'Abd Allāh. He lived in Baghdad and was a *mawlā* of the 'Abbāsids. Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī said he was "sincere (*ṣadūq*)," while his son declared him "reliable (*thiqa*)." His *ḥadīth*s are found in IM, and he died in Jumādā II 258/872. (TT 3:384)

'ABBĀS B. MUḤAMMAD B. ḤĀTIM AL-DŪRĪ. A *Hadīth* scholar of Baghdad and important student of the famous critic Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn. Nasā'ī considered him

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